



The Mall

2016-2017

Article

2017

The Mall: Writing from Butler University's First Year Seminar 2016-17

The Mall Staff

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THE MALL

Writing from Butler University's
First Year Seminar 2016 - 17

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A Note from the Editor-In-Chief

Hello Readers,

As the Editor-In-Chief of this edition of *The Mall*, let me be the first to introduce you to this wonderful book! My executive team and I worked countless hours, and read hundreds of essays to find the best of the best First Year Seminar (FYS) essays to be published. The purpose of *The Mall* is so current and future first-year students could have an understanding of the writing standard that is upheld at Butler University. This publication is not here to intimidate you, but to motivate you. Readers will find works covering anything from a student's experience on campus, to another's thoughts on philosophical readings from their class. *The Mall* provides students with a wide variety of works to find inspiration from. Butler has been known to do great things on the court, but it is up to us to prove that Bulldogs also achieve in the classroom. Of course, thank you to the English Department, FYS faculty and students, and to all who have supported and taken a part in this endeavor.

Taryn B. Plamann
Editor-In-Chief

Forward

For many first-year students embarking on the intrepid collegiate journey, muddled in the new social experiences and focused academic subjects, there is a new world of writing exposed that challenges the mind and soul. Academic and creative writing are arguably the cornerstone of a liberal arts education; the vehicle by which ideas and meticulous originality are communicated. First-year students at Butler are fortunate to have the First Year Seminar (FYS) system, as a gateway to exploratory academics, and a resource to cultivate the creative mind demanded by a liberal arts education. The editorial staff of *The Mall*, and I have considered the opportunity to review our peers' work and create this publication a great honor.

Our intention for *The Mall* was to make it a compilation of diverse and excellent first-year student works. Throughout the editorial process we were continuously impressed by the volume and quality, of submissions made to us week after week. The Class of 2020 did not make completing this publication an easy task, which is something I believe shows in both the number and diversity of pieces we have placed between these covers. As I commend our authors for their exemplary work, I must also commend my fellow editors for their diligence, and devotion to making this publication a success. Many hours were spent debating the merits of submitted pieces, the proper place of each work in the publication at large, and the proper balance of the style of pieces we accepted. The editorial staff did painstaking work to ensure that the 2017 edition of *The Mall* contains not only academically written papers, but also examples of students' creative writing capabilities, such as poetry and prose, and personal narratives. Also reflected, we hope, is a diversity of subjects and ideas; including content from courses founded in the context of a specific science or other field of study. While I firmly stand by the decisions reflected in this edition of *The Mall*, I would be negligent to not acknowledge the exceptional quality of some submissions we received that, nevertheless, have not been published. The limitations of both space and time forced the editorial staff to make several difficult decisions before the final version was set.

I would compound my negligence if I did not give special recognition to a member of our editorial staff. Chris Zeheralis, both a member of the editorial staff during the Spring 2017 semester and the copy editor for this edition of *The Mall*, was a particularly integral part of our staff, without whom, the publication would not exist. His sacrifice of time during summer classes in order to bring this publication to completion is greatly appreciated by all of us on the editorial staff. Accompanying our appreciation is excitement to see the 2017 edition of *The Mall* distributed as a representation of both the Class of 2020, and Butler FYS. We look forward to reading future editions of *The Mall* and recounting this wonderful experience.

David M. Sexton
Managing Editor

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IT STARTED WITH A PUNCH AND A PRODIGY

Marissa Weiner

I punched him. I don't remember, but I'm told I punched him. He fell onto the dewy grass, crying for all to hear. I didn't pity him; he stood in my way. Other boys and girls watched as I dribbled down the field, soccer ball tucked closely to my body so no one could steal what I worked so hard to obtain. Parents screamed from the sideline, begging the referee to stop me. I was too fast. I showed no remorse. I was Marissa Weiner, and I was the four-year-old soccer prodigy.

My soccer career began as soon as my right fist abandoned my hip and struck his cheek. I was the best of the best, and parents knew it. When they looked at the season's schedule and saw that their child's team was playing "The Lightning," they knew to dress their son or daughter in their best shin guards. They knew to bring extra orange slices for the half-time snack, because Marissa Weiner, the 4-year-old soccer prodigy, may want some. Sweatband across forehead, I was the Mia Hamm of "Soccer Tots," and people knew I was going places. Referees feared all three feet and twenty-seven pounds of me, and I feared nothing but untied laces.

*

I was recruited. The best soccer club in Worthington, Ohio wanted me, Marissa Weiner, the now nine-year-old soccer prodigy, to be on their elite team, and I couldn't believe it. I grabbed my size three baby blue soccer ball, grass stained knee socks, strap-on shin guards, and blood stained Nike sweatband and was ready to meet my new team. My dad, like always, gave me a pep talk during the car ride to practice. "Don't be afraid to be selfish," he'd mutter. I was never much of a goal-scorer. I liked seeing the smiles on my teammate's faces, front teeth missing and all, when they heard the ball smack off their cleat and skim the back of the net.

As soon as I met my ten new teammates, I knew they were girls that I'd be able to count on forever. We were teammates, and teammates were for life. Jessica was the first to introduce herself. She had a curly black ponytail, and wore silver sports goggles that took up half of her face. When she took off her goggles, she had bright green eyes that lit up when she talked about her favorite soccer player, Frankie Hejduk. She told me her middle name was George, after her Grandpa. "George?" I asked, confused. "But that's a *boy's* name!" Jessica was also a fairly new member on the team, and although I mocked her middle name, she graciously took me under her wing- literally. Standing just right below her collarbones, I was the smallest on the team. But I was Marissa Weiner, the 9-year-old soccer prodigy, so this was of no concern.

My new soccer coach wore black and white Adidas Sambas shoes to each practice, had a short, military-like haircut, and was tan even during the winter months. He was kind, but intimidating- especially when he made us run “suicides” at the end of each practice.

“Speedy!” Travis yelled from his coach’s chair. I quickly stopped juggling my soccer ball and cocked my head towards him.

“Not you, Marissa,” he corrected.

“Kristen, come over here please!” I was shocked. I was Marissa Weiner, the nine-year-old soccer prodigy, speedier than all other nine-year-olds.

“Why does she get to be called Speedy?” I asked vulnerably.

“You have to earn a nickname on this team, Marissa.”

“Well, how do I ‘earn’ one?”

“You have to impress me. You haven’t done that yet”

I craved a nickname. I stayed up at night, thinking about what I’d have to do to be called something other than “Marissa.” I wanted to be “Speedy,” but I’m no Speedy II or Speedy Jr., so I would have to settle for a new nickname. Practice after practice, I awaited Travis’ nickname announcement. After dominating the sprints at practice, scoring upper ninety goals, and juggling for hours on end, Travis finally awarded me a nickname. “Mo. I’ll call you Mo.”

“Mo? Your name is MA-rissa, not MO-rissa. What are you, one of The Three Stooges?” my mother complained. “Your father and I already have a nickname for you. What’s so wrong with ‘Pickle?’” Her voice began to fade away. *Mo*. I was finally Mo, the nine-year-old soccer prodigy.

*

As time went on, tall teammates shot into hoops instead of goals, skinny teammates laced their ballet shoes and pitched their soccer cleats, and strong teammates ditched the soccer field for a balance beam. I tried basketball, but was far too aggressive and far too short, and ran around like an angry leprechaun. I ventured into ballet, but couldn’t point my toes or pirouette without seeing stars. I undertook gymnastics, but feared the cheese pit. I stuck with soccer, knowing that as the twelve-year-old soccer prodigy, I couldn’t just abandon the sport.

It was my last game with Travis sitting in his coach’s chair and yelling “Go, Mo!” from the sideline. After four years of nicknaming and soccer coaching, Travis was moving to North Carolina for his new corporate job, and we were to get a new coach. Rumors quickly circulated about who was to be our new coach.

“I heard he’s a midget!”

“I heard he’s British!”

“I heard he doesn’t have teeth!”

His name was Simon. He stood at six feet two inches, and smiled with bright white teeth. He had dark brown hair, pale blue eyes, and a pointy nose that looked like a beak. He shouted “Mo” in a thick British accent that startled me, no matter how many times the syllable came off his tongue. He was cruel. He prioritized winning over fun. He was removed from games for squawking at referees. He called us “Muppets” and “train wrecks” when we missed an empty net. Friends and teammates quit. But I wasn’t sensitive. I could take it. I was Mo, the Muppet, the train wreck, the twelve-year-old soccer prodigy.

We’d practice through tornado sirens, snowstorms, and heat advisories. We’d receive text messages telling us to bring shovels to practice so we could clear off the field and prepare for our next game. We’d run for miles, our sweat and tears freezing as we ran in below zero weather. We’d bleed on ourselves and on each other. But we were good. We travelled everywhere from Las Vegas to Orlando, playing the best teams across The United States and Canada.

*

I loved cleat shopping. I’d scan the rows of women’s cleats for hours, contemplating which shoe would enhance my performance. I’d always pick the flashiest, brightest pair, hoping they’d make me the center of attention, the star player. My favorite pair was deep purple with a neon yellow heel and base. I told myself they’d make me run faster, tackle harder, and shoot stronger. They never did.

I was fast, but Stephanie was faster. I was strong, but Aisha was stronger. I scored goals, but not as many as Remi. I could juggle to 500, but Maddie could juggle to 501. Despite having the best cleats, I wasn’t the best. I quickly went from MVP to just a VP. I wasn’t the prodigy I once was; I became ordinary. Referees didn’t fear me, but pitied me. I was small and sheepish, and went unnoticed. I was Mo, I was average, and I was a fifteen-year-old soccer player.

*

I called her “Kels.” “Kelsey” wasn’t difficult to say; it’s just two short syllables, but I thought she deserved a nickname. She was a left midfielder, and I was a left fullback. She’d run the flank, French braid blowing in the wind, eager to score the first goal of the match. And she would, too. She’d score nearly every game, each time celebrating by leaping nearly three feet straight in the air and launching her fist above her head like John Bender in *The Breakfast Club*.

She called me “Casper,” and I hated it. I knew I didn’t tan well. I could barely look at myself in the mirror with my banana-colored uniform on without tears falling down my freckled cheeks.

“No one looks good in that God-awful color, Pickle,” my mom affirmed.

Since she was extremely thin and had legs that looked like they would snap if she didn’t wear shin guards, I decided I’d call her “chicken legs.” I wish I hadn’t. I wish I could go back and tell her that I was just jealous. I wish I had known that would be our last conversation.

When my four-year-old self threw that punch, I had no idea that twelve years later I’d attend the funeral of a teammate. I had no idea that my team and I would sit second row at the service of one of our own. I had no idea I’d watch as tears flow from Simon’s pale blue eyes. I had no idea I would stand next to Jessica, still right below her collarbones, looking at our teammate’s pale, lifeless body. I had no idea that I’d shudder when we were told to run “suicides” at practice. I had no idea that every time I braided my hair I’d think of her always-perfect French braid that was long enough to fall right between the numbers “2” and “6” on her jersey. I had no idea that every time I thought of soccer, I’d think of her.

*

I never would’ve punched him if I knew what I know now. I never would’ve met her if I hadn’t punched him, if I never learned to love the game. I had no idea a two second punch would bring me fifteen years of the best combination of euphoria and misery that would be so difficult to wave goodbye to. I wish I had known how hard it would be to slip off my cleats for the last time and bid farewell to header goals and corner kicks. I wish I had known what I was in for. I wish I could go back and stop four-year-old me from making the biggest mistake of my life.

It hurt to part with the game that brought me so many happy and sad tears, but it hurt my dad more. After watching me throw punches and score goals for fourteen years, he was my biggest fan. Through sleet and below zero temperatures, I never once looked at the sideline to not see him standing there smiling and giving me a thumbs up. He was the one who woke up at five o’clock in the morning to drive me to middle-of-nowhere Kentucky while I reclined the passenger seat and slept until he swerved and loudly drove over the road’s rumble strips. I never once believed this was accidental; I was always woken up just in time for him to give me a pep talk. “Don’t afraid to be selfish, Pickle...”

The game consumed me, and I let it. I’d stay up until two o’clock in the morning, thinking about my missed shots and failed assists, trying my best to cry quietly under my sheets so my dad wouldn’t hear. I hated knowing that

I was no Mia Hamm. I hated the insults: the short jokes, the Jew jokes, the pale jokes. I hated the blisters, the never healing scabs, the turf burns, and the weeklong headaches that came from heading the ball. I hated the missed birthday parties, homecoming dances, and family gatherings. I hated knowing that I'd never again see Kelsey leap into the air after scoring a goal, smiling as best she could with her mouth guard covering her teeth. I hated knowing that no matter how hard I ran, tackled, and kicked, I'd never take home a trophy reading "MVP," "Best Defensive Player," or even "Most Improved." It hurt to continue. I had no other choice but to blow the whistle and end the game. I wanted so badly to be the best, but I already was. I was Mo, and I *was* the soccer prodigy.

TRIGGERED BY TRIGGER WARNINGS:
A LOOK AT DIFFICULTIES THROUGH
COLLEGIATE UTILIZATION

Levi Elliott

Black Beauty is an insightful children's book that contains an intense allegory for rape and sexual abuse. I only realized these analogies in my First Year Seminar where our class intensely discussed the character of a horse named Ginger, and the implications her allegorical rape had on the life she lived inside of *Black Beauty*. Our discussion's tone was very serious and, as part of the preliminary reading prior to that discussion, the class read material by Ruth Padel. Her piece "Saddled with Ginger" was incredibly thoughtful and was an excellent addition to our conversation, but contained direct excerpts from erotica involving forceful sexual situations. It wasn't overtly inappropriate; the erotic context was centuries old and was extremely supplemental to Padel's argument. However, the nature of rape does not change and the portrayal of it was still gruesome in both *Black Beauty* and Padel's writing. For the sake of discussion in our class and gaining as much from my course as possible, this gruesomeness was something I had to deal with head-on; despite my own experiences with the topic at hand.

I felt unable to breathe as I sat next to my classmates. I was sitting in seminar, in the second chair to the left of the back table, and I felt paralyzingly overwhelmed. I could feel the panic inside of me creeping through my entire body; it took as much effort as I could muster to not get up and leave the room. I was flashing back to the time that I myself experienced what rape felt like. Just the discussion caused my mind to jump back to the mental state that I was in after my own incident. I remember the brief moments I had to pull myself together before my parents came home, dealing with the nauseated feelings that come from being so violated, and contemplating the disgust I felt with myself and the situation. My mind seemed to be stuck in memories of weeks after my incident, when I was trying everything I could to get the feeling of my rapist off of me. I reverted to the mental state I was in whenever my life became increasingly complicated and painful, all due to the way I spiraled after the incident. In mere seconds, all of the thoughts and emotions associated with my rape came boiling back to the surface and demanded to be dealt with.

After class, I barely talked to my boyfriend for the rest of the day. Even though I knew he was nothing like the man that had raped me, I still felt sick talking to someone in such an intimate way after reliving every aspect of what had happened. However, I find myself thankful that the triggers this time were not as bad as the times last month, and that the triggers last month were not as bad as they had been before. Every month I believe I've been growing as a person. I'm trying to live life to the fullest and not let my past negatively define who I am today, and I know that this outlook is helping me improve little by little. I am thankful that I was able to talk to my boyfriend at all afterward, because in the past I would not have been able to. I have just recently gotten to the point where I feel comfortable opening up emotionally to someone again, even with my constant worrying that a setback could come from being reminded about the rape. I have recovered immensely to where I am comfortable with sharing my experiences, but sometimes I am still caught off guard. Without being warned about rape discussions, I find it hard to hold myself together when I talk. I continue to struggle with some aspects of my story whenever I tell it. I still cannot listen to "Follow Me" by Uncle Kracker because it reminds me of a person who sexually abused me. It was his favorite song, one that he showed me during one of our deepest talks; he loved explaining the meaning of the lyrics to it, and played it whenever he could. Every time I listen to that song, I panic and have to dedicate all of my focus to not falling apart in front of whomever else is in the room. It troubles me that after so long something as simple as a song can still control me in that way, but it does.

I doubt that there will ever be a day where I am not reminded of my experience whenever someone discusses such sensitive topics, or plays that song. With that said, I do find peace in the fact that one day I might be able to discuss the incident without having to remind myself I am not in that moment. I recently stopped doing a double-take and feeling shock every time someone said the phrase "on cloud nine." This phrase is what one sexual abuser of mine said he felt when he thought of what happened, and for a long time I was forced to take a moment to pull myself together each time I heard that phrase. Now, I don't have to. I do not say that phrase myself because of how it has made me feel, but I do hope to maybe start trying to use it again to slowly use a crude form of exposure therapy on myself. Over time, as things like this start to bother me less and less, I might even be able to listen to the song. With that on my mind, I pondered a question that I believe will, if it has not already, sweep across college campuses: do trigger warnings actually help people like me, or do they simply hinder me both in recovery and in my education?

The University of Chicago released a letter to 2017's incoming freshmen that stated it does not support "trigger warnings" or "safe spaces" on its campus, citing that it limited true academic freedom (Holmes). In essence, the university showed that they took what I would refer to as a "real" world perspective on trigger warnings. The world outside of college most definitely does not come with trigger warnings and the university recognizes this in their statement. The thought process behind their stance outlined that, in a pursuit of true academic freedom, controversial, uncomfortable, or even frightening subjects cannot be considered "off-limits." In the world outside of a college campus, there will be people who oppose your views, are hateful towards you for things you cannot control, and may even shout hurtful and triggering remarks for the sake of crude humor. In the "real" world, no one is warned before they are triggered. Rather, they are slapped in the face by topics that trigger them, and are expected to still behave as though they are fine. *The Huffington Post* wrote an article regarding this issue, specifically citing the aforementioned letter sent out by the University of Chicago, and claims the university's stance sends a clear message that "students who may be susceptible to mental health issues, like post-traumatic stress disorder or panic disorders, are undeserving of a warning that a lecture or guest speaker may aggravate" (Holmes). This writer for *The Post* believes the University's choice to not use trigger warnings shows students that the university does not care about the mental health of students who have been through traumatic incidents. Holmes goes further to say the university's stance on the issue not only portrays this disregard for the status of students' mental health, but can actually negatively impact the mental health of the students attending classes and guest speaker events at the college. By not warning them beforehand about possible triggers, Holmes believes the university could potentially shock students with triggering discussion and cause setbacks to their mental health.

The Post also cites that, contrary to the university's beliefs, trigger warnings actually benefit students (Holmes). This thought is reiterated several times in popular media, including *Times Magazine*, which released an article by Rae Ann Pickett who claimed that "Being able to know beforehand what experiences I should avoid and create an environment where I felt safe made it easier for me to share my struggles and move past them. Everyone deserves that opportunity" (Pickett). Pickett, along with many advocates of trigger warnings, firmly believe that these warnings help people regain positive control of their life after a traumatic event or mental illness. Some college professors also join in on this view and say that adding trigger warnings to their classroom has not hindered class discussion or performance; it has enhanced it (Smith). These professors claim that the warning allowed students to mentally prepare for the discussion, set a

serious tone for the class, and generally created deeper conversations instead of ones that glided over the surface of the issue. However, a survey conducted by the National Coalition Against Censorship showed that a majority of professors actually have a negative view of trigger warnings. Roughly 62% thought the warnings would have a negative effect on academic freedom, and 45% believed the warnings have a direct negative correlation to classroom dynamics (What's All This About Trigger Warnings?).

The professors from this survey voiced specific concerns they had over the use of trigger warnings inside classrooms. A significant number of the NCAC's respondents claimed that trigger warnings would practically invite students to "avoid engaging with uncomfortable course material" (What's All This About Trigger Warnings?). Other professors noted that a trigger warning actually creates an environment inside a classroom that is built with anticipation of tension and contentious conversation rather than mutually beneficial cooperative debates about controversial issues. A recurring theme in the answers given by professors was that the use of trigger warnings could eventually make it impossible to have meaningful discussion on sensitive subjects, which is vital to help create strong and well-rounded members of society. They also expressed that, while they do not support the use of trigger warnings, they feel speaking out against the concept would make them appear insensitive towards students (What's All This About Trigger Warnings?). In a world increasingly becoming knowledgeable and accommodating for mental health issues, the professors against trigger warnings don't want to appear as though they don't care about their students. They truly do, they just worry about that a hindrance on discussion also hinders the education their students deserve (What's All This About Trigger Warnings?).

Instinctively, I feel an inclination to embrace the negative side of trigger warnings. However, I feel as though this viewpoint is due to where and how I was raised. A small-town in southern Indiana that struggles with heroin addiction, has poverty levels above the national average, and that is also above the average of people without health or medical insurance (Quick) is not an ideal place for safe spaces or trigger warnings. Instead, I was definitely raised with a "rub some dirt on it" mentality. This is not to say that my family is not well provided for; I lived a comfortable and definitely privileged life growing up and still do. However, being in close contact with those in an environment that was not quite like that allowed for daily reiteration of one clear message: the "real" world, while it can occasionally be pleasant, is far from a walk in the park. For many citizens in my community, food seemed much more important than trigger warnings, and because of this I believe I have developed an inclination to "tough it out" as much as possible where mental health is concerned. This

is why I have tried to simply deal with my triggers as they come instead of trying to prevent them or even seek treatment for my issues. I am thankful for my upbringing, the community I was raised in, and the struggles I have endured, because these things have forced me to adopt a mental fortitude and toughness that many do not have. In essence, these things have taught me to smile through the pain. I use that smile as a constant shield against the world around me and it has proven to be a powerful tool to help me deal with the triggers I face. I say this simply to point out that these are skills that I've had to develop. Others have grown up able to develop skills that I could never acquire, yet they may not have the emotional mental fortitude someone in my situation does. I would consider myself ignorant if I believed everyone has cultivated those skills to the extent that I have, which is what complicates the issue of trigger warnings in my mind.

Being reminded about rape or any other traumatic experience that one has had to experience is unbelievably painful. For many, the abstract discussion of religion, terrorism, xenophobia, sexuality, poverty and other subjects can incite emotions or beliefs held so firmly that they can become quickly irritated by a few opposing sentences. This is what supplements my belief towards a broad acceptance of trigger warnings. Perhaps, if given time to mentally prepare themselves for such discussion, these students would be able to participate and hear multiple sides of an issue without as much emotional bias. This is the hope of some professors who choose to utilize trigger warnings in their courses. One particular professor shares their thoughts on this specific subject in the report released by NCAC, saying, "I've warned students that I was about to show them an upsetting or potentially offensive image, but I've never not shown it. Giving students the tools to prepare themselves to engage with potentially upsetting material, if they choose, is a good use of such warnings" (What's All This About Trigger Warnings?). This professor does not give the students an opportunity to not partake, view, or hear the material that comes with that trigger warning. The basic thought behind this approach is that it is impossible to truly learn about these issues without properly discussing them. Instructors using this approach can only hope that students heeded their warning and mentally prepared themselves for the discussion ahead.

Unfortunately, some people are in the early stages of mental recovery from a traumatic event and simply allowing time for mental preparation is not nearly enough to avoid becoming triggered by a sensitive topic. This is why some instructors allow students to opt out of material that they may find particularly disturbing. While information reported by the NCAC's survey definitely does not show this to be the norm, many instructors see it as the future of what it means to issue a trigger warning.

They also fear that, by opting out of the given material, students lose a valuable part of the course (What's All This About Trigger Warnings?). This unique balance between mental health and education is what troubles college campuses nationwide. While professors realize that their bottom line is to cover the appropriate material, and that the classroom is certainly not the appropriate place to deal with an individual's mental health issues, they still prioritize the wellbeing of students.

The issue certainly is not a simple one, and there is no systematic formula for this type of precaution. However, speaking from the perspective of my own experiences, I can say that there is no way instructors can tag every trigger in the world with their warnings. There is simply too much individualism involved with mental health issues.

Triggers are unique for every person; any number of things can bring back memories that are difficult for someone to handle. For example, I can barely stand to listen to "Follow Me" by Uncle Kracker, and, until very recently, struggled every time I heard the phrase "on cloud nine." Both of those things are inherently associated with happiness, summer days, and a positive attitude. Ultimately, there is no reason why these things should be flagged as potentially triggering by instructors. Even if there were an appropriate way for my instructor to be forewarned of everything I have experienced, it would be impossible for them to know such individual and unique triggers. However, there are definitely general issues that all instructors could give warnings about. An abstract discussion about a reality I have experienced could affect not only my experience in the classroom that day, but also my experience in the course as a whole and even my personal mental health.

This is an issue of growing relevance, and one that undoubtedly requires more research than what is currently available before making a conclusive decision. With such a vast range of issues, it is possible that this debate will never have a concrete resolution. However, a majority of scenarios can be covered if professors use their common sense about what a sensitive topic could be. Professors have experienced extensive education to teach at a collegiate level, and therefore should understand that life is a continuum of learning. They can implement this strategy in their classroom by thinking of a list of general topics that could be sensitive and issuing warnings before these are discussed, and then as they learn throughout the years of other topics that they may have missed, they can simply add that to list of things they issue a trigger warning for. This is not a perfect method, but it is a start, and is the best method that can be used with the current research.

However, it is important for instructors to reiterate the importance of participation in these sensitive discussions to students. They continue to be a vital part of the education students will receive, even if

the discussions are hard to handle. Personally, I know how hard it is. It is excruciating to confront these scenarios; the pain from the experience never actually goes away, and these discussions inflame the pain all over again. The only thing that changes is how well you can deal with the emotional turmoil from what happened. Discussion in a classroom is a great way to slowly and constructively deal with the issue, while receiving an education and fulfilling course requirements. With a little bit of warning, but not the ability to avoid, classroom discussions have actually helped me better deal with the experiences I have been through.

A perfect example is this paper. A year ago, I could not have written this. I would not have been able to openly say that I was raped; it felt like a secret I had to carry with me until the end of time. Honestly, I sometimes still feel uncomfortable saying it. The discomfort ranges in reason; sometimes I feel like I should be ashamed of myself for being raped, sometimes I feel like if I do not say it for long enough then maybe it will eventually cease to be a part of my history. Neither of these reasons makes logical sense, but they are still in my mind. Thankfully, talking about serious issues in a classroom with some warning and an empathetic professor has allowed me to progress my mental health so I can write a paper like this. This is what the true effect of a trigger warning is: the creation of mental fortitude through knowledge of an inevitably approaching difficulty.

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DROWNING IN MY THOUGHTS

Kyle Giebel

The light blue 2004 Ford Taurus barely turns over. I turn the lights on with aching fingers and squinting eyes. I look down at the aftermarket LED display to check the time. The intensity of the light was too much to handle in the darkness of the Indiana winter. I curse my older brother for putting an expensive sound system and display in the “Blue Bullet”. The time is 5:31 a.m., odd for your average person, but routine for my winter days. The temperature is a brisk zero degrees Fahrenheit plus or minus a few degrees; it is decently warm compared to the previous years. I sigh as I back out of the driveway and my breath rolls out of my mouth onto the windshield. I start my daily drive towards the high school.

This meaningless routine was absolutely necessary for my days to go smoothly. Swim practice set the tone for the rest of the events in my day. Swimming consumed my life and I didn’t mind it, or at least I didn’t know it. I didn’t mind the early mornings, the hellacious practices, or the factory produced scrambled eggs for breakfast. I was a swimmer and it was just a part of the title.

The five-minute commute seemed like an hour-long drive. With every turn of the wheel my back ached with dull soreness. My arms felt heavy and lifeless as if they have been tied to cinderblocks. My whole body is one quick movement from a perpetual cramp. My movements behind the wheel were slow and methodical. My body and the world around me were in slow motion while my thoughts were racing through my mind.

I take state road 28 to the school. It is a 2-lane road lined with street lamps and 24-hour burger joints on either side. The amount light being used when the whole town sleeps is astounding. As I drive, the school approaching in the distance, my eyes gloss over. The McDonald’s sign becomes a red and yellow mass of light. The streetlights turn to mysterious orbs floating by in the sky. The one stop light in town turns into a flashing beacon of nondescript light. This is typical for my drive. If someone were watching me they would try and break my wide-eyed, blank stare, empty faced trance.

Neither the radio nor the engine made any impression on me. Every sound became more and more muffled until they all blurred together to create a low hum, almost like a fan turned on for white noise while I sleep. What I heard on the drive would be completely different than that of anything a passenger would have heard. Any passenger would have heard the fans of the heater, the engine struggling to keep up, or the song on the radio. I heard none of this.

My thoughts as I drive completely consume me. I eventually made it to the school safely but I remember nothing specific about the physical world after the lights became a blur. This was the day I became conscious of my life. I started to think to myself:

“Why?... Why are you doing this?... It doesn’t matter... It is meaningless.”

Then the train left the station. I remember how I couldn’t come up with a concrete answer, and the anger that boiled inside of me as a result. I live my life in a rational way. I need facts and sharp answers for justification of doing anything, and for some reason swimming slipped through that filter. I was angry because I hadn’t found a reason. I was furious that I couldn’t find a reason. One thought flowed through my mind:

“Meaningless. It is all meaningless.”

The next thought that ran through my head was the peak of my train of thought. I remember thinking that if I were to get in a terrible crash and die, I would be completely indifferent about it. I didn’t want to die; I would simply have accepted it. I painted a vivid picture of the hypothetical accident in my mind. The slow motion crunch of metal against a light pole. My body flying through the windshield. The safety glass shatters through the air and twinkles yellow in the light of the mysterious orbs. The expression on my face was empty. There was no emotion, only a small hint of peace. I then imagined my life then flashing before my eyes. I could see everything that ever mattered to me. My friends and my family all had spots in my thoughts as had my pseudo pre death flashbacks.

I’m not cold any more. The heater is finally working or I am just numb. My money is on numb. I come back into the real world in the parking lot. I am in the same parking spot, right beside the “Reserved Athletic Department Members Only” parking space. It is 5:36. I sit trying to remember how I got there. I remained motionless as if the cold had finally broken me down. My stare, cold and hard, cast in the direction of the door that seemed so suddenly unappealing. My mind began racing once again.

To paraphrase Shakespeare; “To swim or not to swim.” I pondered this for the first time in a life that was filled with swimming. There was no reason why I should have to submit myself to the brutal cold, early mornings, or tortuous practices. There was no reason I had to be there that morning, or

any morning. There was no reason I had to swim. The option to quit was always there and always will be there. This is the first time I had noticed it. I had chosen to be a swimmer and that meant struggling along the way. I could have just as quickly chosen not to be a swimmer, but the idea of quitting to make me happy didn't sit right with me. Thinking about the drive home sent a shiver down my spine. I couldn't quit. I had already accepted that I wasn't going to the Olympics; it just wasn't in the cards. There is no monetary inspiration in swimming either, and I knew that. There wasn't an immediate positive to me continuing to swim. I couldn't quit. I had created meaning by enduring the struggle for so long. It became so normal to me that quitting would have ripped a hole in the space-time continuum. I was having an existential argument with myself in a parking lot at 5:38 AM. No wonder the world's greatest Olympian had smoked weed and battled depression for most of the latter half of his career. This was a heavy subject for a 16-year boy old to contemplate while I am still worried about asking my crush to junior prom.

I still sit in the same motionless state. The windows are in an intermediate state of fog and clarity; there is just enough clarity to see the door but enough fog to piss someone off if they had to drive any distance in these conditions. The heater must be working now. I notice my teammates a few spots over. They sit in a 1990 Toyota Corolla. In the driver's seat sits my best friend and best competitor. He was 18 at the time and I strived to be like him in most ways. Next to him in the passenger's seat sat one of the freshmen on the team. They carpool together every day since they are neighbors. That seems to be the only thing they have in common. The freshman sits with an innocent smirk on his face, as if he was happy to be there sitting with a senior. Our eyes connect and he waves and begins to dance to some inaudible music. I look at the driver and he has blank stare. It seems familiar in so many ways. My gaze shifts back and the poor boy is still dancing. I look away in disgust and slight jealousy. The time is 5:41.

The look on his face is one I had made mere minutes before. I wonder when my friend had asked himself the same questions I had. I wonder why he even was still swimming. I also wonder when that poor freshman will hit the wall as we both had. I did feel a small pinch of comfort knowing that I wasn't the only one who felt the weight of awareness. I had strength in numbers at that point. We would make a choice together and we would have each other for support. The question, still at hand, was to stay or to leave? I sat, still undecided.

I glance out my window and I see a shadow approaching the "Blue Bullet". My friend shuffles on the slippery pavement to the window. The fog is even thicker on the windows. I can feel the heat burning my skin. My sore muscles are just now just a dull discomfort. I could sit there forever.

I hear a knock on the window. I crack the door and I see a weathered smile.

He asks, “Are you coming?”

I don’t reply. I only feel the slap of cold air hitting my roasted cheeks. I look into his eyes. They are dark and cold, but full of trust. We sit for what seems like a full minute.

He breaks the silence; “Come on, we have to go.”

This is the moment that I knew that he knew we were on the same page. In those six words he answered the question whether to stay or leave, or whether to swim or to quit. In those six words he stuck out his hand to help me. In those six words he reassured me of what I needed to do. This may have been me looking for an answer or for a sign from some higher being. He may have no clue what I had just been through and he may just always look like that at 5:43 in the morning. Whatever the case may be, he helped me.

I turn the car off and remove the keys from the ignition. The metal key chain is warm in my palm. I step out of the car. My body aches as I close the door to the “Blue Bullet”. My friend and I turn to the door and start a slow walk. It is still dark. It is still cold. As we walk, the wind whips specs of ice that sting our cheeks. We tuck our heads and carry on towards the door. Each step I take is a battle being fought on two fronts. I look at my friend. He is walking at my pace and his face is chiseled with determination and acceptance. My mind slows down and a wave of clarity falls over my body. I re-tuck my head and keep walking, modeling his acceptance. We get to the door and each release a long, deep sigh. With those sighs we communicated to each other that we both knew we had the option to quit, but we needed to continue the drive.

ENTROPY AT WORK

Malcolm Butler

Another day I wake up, another day removed from the OG me. The me that was untainted by the world. Well, maybe not “untainted;” too many negative connotations associated with that word. More like uninfluenced. Even if I can’t remember the thoughts I had, the people I met, and everything I did yesterday, they all contributed to the person I am now. Even just typing that sentence changed who I am. I’m a changed man with every action and every thought.

This isn’t true for only me. It applies to everyone. You, reading this attempt at documenting the unstoppable train of thought, are changed by every word you read. These changes may be imperceptible, but they’ll probably influence your psyche in the subtlest of ways. Your subconscious mind will never forget how you felt reading these words long after the words themselves have faded from memory.

With each passing day we become more scrambled up versions of ourselves. We’re constantly being updated, but not necessarily improved, kind of like the new iOS 10 update. Things change more for the sake of changing than to progress or destroy. The natural order of things is disorder and there’s little we can do to stop it.

From my perch high atop the top bunk I see the natural order of things manifested in our room. It’s a hodgepodge of our belongings with a little rhyme and a bit of reason to it. On move-in day everything was clean, but just a few weeks in, our room is unrecognizable compared to the pictures from day one on my phone. It’s like babies, who come out looking more like little lumps of humanity than developed humans. You can see traces of that infant in a grown person’s face years later but it will never be the same.

We are the room. With every new piece of furniture, each article of clothing, every person that enters, each particle of dust, the room is changed. Those who lived here before left behind almost unnoticeable evidence that they existed. I’m sure some particularly observant individual will see our “contributions” to the room months after we’re long gone. Each contribution is a wrinkle in the grey matter, uncountable and individually small but still the foundation of who we are.

Heading down the hall to showers, there’s more evidence of increasing disorder. The carpet is a quilt of patterns in stark contrast to the dull grays of original design. The flooding has left its mark on Ross in the form of mismatched carpet squares. Oh, and the smell. Almost forgot about it but it hits you hard on the way to the showers. A putrid mix of mold, sewer water, and the old scent of Ross. That smell is definitely evidence of entropy at work.

This disorder doesn't just apply to us. It applies to everything. Every cracked tile of the shower floor, every drop from the stream of water from the shower head, every particle of anything that exists changes from second to second, no, from moment to moment. A moment so small that we can't even detect or measure its length in time. The only thing constant is change.

Every fiber of the carpet bends under my feet, never to return to the same state twice. My key and the inner mechanisms of the lock on the dorm room door become slightly more worn with every use. My shirt's condition deteriorates every time I wear it and with every wash. It'll never be that brand-new shirt I got from a basketball camp years ago. It will never be the same shirt that was rolled up in my drawer a few moments ago. The wrinkles will fade as the day progresses and a completely different set will form as soon as I ball it up and put it in my hamper later tonight.

Walking outside, on the way to my 8:25 a.m. class, the disorder of nature is apparent. I can see other's attempts at organization, the paved roads, the buildings of campus, the trimmed hedges, the cut grass. I can also see entropy at work on each one of these things. Uneven pavement, cracks and stains and plants on the buildings, hedges growing out of their freshly trimmed shapes, grass growing high again.

Others are heading to class, too. They talk about various forms of nothing: "How was your weekend?", "Last night was weird...", "I gotta show you this..." All conversations that will be forgotten as soon as a few moments from now, but still every word changes us. There is no stopping change. It comes and goes in so many forms that even the most attentive person can't see all these influences.

And it doesn't just determine who we are. Entropy is the defining rule of the universe. Disorder is the natural state of things. We usually frown upon disorder. Our notes need to be orderly, our thoughts need to be focused, our actions need to be deliberate and purposeful. No whims allowed! This might as well be plastered all over schools across the nation, right up there with the "hang in there" cat and the "impossible? No, I'm possible" posters. They're teaching us how to think about the world, how to be organized, how to systematically think through everything.

It's funny how all this learning helps us realize how lost we are. Every new discovery raises more questions. The disorder of the universe is so highly organized that we can only hope to understand all its laws. We have guesses, but we've always had guesses. All it takes is a few new findings for everything we thought we knew to be proven wrong.

The goal to organize the universe into a set of laws is a noble one, but it might not ever be attainable. New discoveries raise new questions. There will always be discoveries out there. We'll never discover it all. Entropy will always outdo us.

The only thing that's constant is change. Sade almost had it right in her song "It's never as good as the first time". It's never the same as the first time is a little closer to the truth. Disorder isn't bad. It's natural. Many find beauty in the symmetry and patterns in nature, but these patterns didn't exist some time ago. They are evidence of entropy at work. The flora and fauna of today don't even remotely resemble their primordial ancestors. They are the result of random mutations and chance encounters.

Just like us. Our primate ancestors developed into *Homo sapiens* through random chance. I wouldn't be here going to class, typing this write now if my parents hadn't met by some chance encounter at the University of Florida years ago.

Coming to grips with this randomness, with the fact that entropy is always at work, is what many philosophies preach. Christianity says that this randomness is all a part of God's plan and that every action has a purpose. We must accept His plan and trust that He will work it out. Stoicism says that acceptance is the only way to deal with it. Buddhism says that life is suffering for those with attachments and that the only way to overcome this suffering is to let go and accept that everything changes.

They all contain the truth. Entropy is always, always, always at work. The sooner we can accept that, the sooner we can choose how to live our lives.

A reminder just went off on my phone. Time for calculus; time to study the rates of change of everything. Sure, there are some constant equations with undefined rates of change, but these functions only serve as limits for real world functions. The laws and functions that govern our lives can only approach, but never reach, these constants. The same is true for all of us. We can only strive to be consistent, but the fact of the matter is that perfect consistency is unattainable. As humans, we are full of changes, and it's not just due to human nature. It is the most fundamental property of the nature of the universe itself.

OKAY

Arianna Morrison

I'm not doing anything in particular or of great importance when she calls that evening. It was (and still is) quite a habit of mine to waste away a lot of time on my computer. I'm sure I'll do more worthwhile things in the future. At least she wasn't interrupting anything with her call. I was actually quite happy about it. Since I had moved away from home for my year as a trainee dancer in Palm Beach, I was most often the one calling home to my mom, so it was a nice surprise for it to happen the other way around. So I do what anyone is supposed to do when their phone rings, and I answer.

"Hi Momma!"

"Hi honey, how are you?"

"Pretty good, just chillin'."

This exchange goes on for some time. I babble on and on about the company when she asks, because I'm good at talking, and I don't have many people to talk to down here. (A sample from my end: "It isn't too bad, but I'm still getting used to things. Yes I'm sure I'll be able to see myself improving soon. Oh yeah! There was this great guest choreographer one week, but now we are starting Peter and the Wolf and I'm not sure how I feel about swaying in the back as the meadow like a kid in a school play.")

Well apparently the catching up part can't last forever, and mom decided that it was time she had to get serious. "Hey honey, I've got something to tell you. I didn't want to tell you over the phone but I didn't want to wait either."

She's waiting for my response. I've moved to sit on my bed, and I had my laptop open in front of me. I fiddled with the mouse a bit before responding. "Of course, Momma, what's up?"

It can't be anything bad right? Maybe it's something about my car. Or maybe something happened at work? But then that wouldn't really concern me. Unless it is bad? Oh crap. Please don't be bad. Please let it just be some mom worry thing that isn't really bad. And with that inner monologue over, she drops the bomb on me, no lead in, nothing.

"Alex and I are getting a divorce."

What?

"Oh. Okay." And that's all I really had to say.

Contrary to my initial reaction, I really couldn't say I was surprised. The writing had been on the wall for a while now. A few months ago I was told they were getting separate apartments when I moved down here. The reasoning sounded good, if a little forced. Mom knew a coworker who had a great arrangement with her husband; they both worked better when they lived separately most of the time. They visited each other on weekends, and they were happy. And it was this way for more people than you might think! Well at the time I wasn't even thinking about their situation, or if I was it was completely replaced with other factors. To me, it meant the first home we had lived in, the first non-apartment we had together, was getting left behind. After two years I could actually call that place home, and now it would be gone.

They ended up three doors down from each other in the same apartment complex. And then they told me they started dating (each other) again. Dating each other? I guess so? I told Momma it made sense when she explained it. Something about needing to get some time away and fall in love with him again? Something about the separate apartments being good because it would force Alex to work more, and that would help me in the long run living in Palm Beach. Something about dating again being a good thing. Nothing about them already being married, and a bit past the dating part.

Momma's saying something else to me. "I really did want to tell you in person but you needed to know and I wasn't sure when I was going to see you again. Things are going to be okay though, you know that right? Alex still loves you and wants to see you. And we are okay too. We both just realized we didn't love each other the same way anymore, and that it wasn't working. So this is a good thing. Okay?"

"Yeah, it's okay Momma."

Why would she even ask me if it was okay? What does okay even mean? That's a dumb question. They've been married for nine years. Nearly a decade, but it's over now. Ironically, I have thought about what it would be like to grow up with just Momma. If I admitted it to myself, I'd say sometimes I had wished for it. But not like this. It was too late now. Too late for them to decide it wasn't going to work. I was just out of high school, they've moved out, I lost a grandmother last year, Alex's mom. Things weren't supposed to fall apart like this.

She's saying something else.

"Thank you for understanding. I just have one more thing before I let you go alright?"

"Yeah, sure Mom."

"Can you please not tell your nana about this?" Her mom. I can already guess why. "I know what she is going to say, and I don't want her dissing Alex or talking bad about him or saying anything to lecture me or

anything like that.” Bingo, give me a prize. “I’m writing her an email, and I’m going to tell her not to say anything to me or to you about it. I don’t need that from her right now, and it wouldn’t be fair to you either. Okay? Just promise me you won’t say anything to her, I’ll handle it.”

It wouldn’t be fair to me. Ha. That’s so funny.

“Okay Momma, don’t worry. I figured you might say something like that.”

“Thanks baby.” Baby? I didn’t know at the time but she starts calling me this sometimes here on out. Weird. “I’m going to go now but I’ll call you soon okay? I love you.”

“Love you too Momma.”

And we hang up. I don’t remember who hits the red button first. But the hitting of the button means the end of the conversation. And the end of the conversation means the thoughts in my head, once held back to focus on said conversation, are given free reign.

First things first: Mom and Alex are getting a divorce. Okay. This is what’s happening, nothing to get sad about.

Second: Well this is kinda funny.

Of course there really wasn’t anything funny about it, at the time or now. But really, when you looked at it, when you looked at what my family had become, it was pretty interesting. My mom never married my dad. She hated her father and had no hesitation in giving me my father’s last name, as opposed to hers, her maiden name. I’m not even a year old when she leaves him, and for good reason (though I hate hearing about it. That was them, and it has nothing to do with me).

Momma brings Alex into my life when I’m very young, four perhaps? I’m not sure. He’s been there even longer maybe. She used to tell me she only introduced him to me once she was sure he would be good. (Sure? Were you?) My parents (even now I still slip up and say that. I suppose it still is true though?) Get married when I’m nine. The wedding is happy, and I’m happy, and I don’t know if I thought anything of it at the time.

It’s not until I’m a teenager that Alex legally adopts me. This was mostly my dad’s fault, but now I have an official stepdad. I still call him Alex, because that’s what I’ve always called him. It wasn’t a big deal at any time. I only started referring to him as ‘my dad’ a couple of years ago to avoid confusion with friends and company who didn’t understand yet.

I remember my elementary teachers used to write home to my mom using ‘Ms. Morrison’. I used to get a kick out of the fact that for a while, we all had different last names. Morrison, Fazio, and De Castro was from Alex. But Momma hated her name, and when she could, though it was some time after the wedding, she took on Alex’s. She kept it when they divorced too. I’ve asked her about it, but she likes it. Their separation brings her no pain, and she likes this name much better. I’m glad she got something lasting out of

it. I don't know what Alex thinks of her having his name; He knows her story, so maybe he doesn't mind. Maybe only I think it's significant. But I do know that the separation did bring him pain, and I don't think he's over it even now.

I still have a stepdad. Alex is still my legal father. I also have a biological father, who I call Dad because I always did. And I call Dad sometimes, and I see him sometimes. It's like that with Alex now, too. The way I see them is similar now (but also nowhere near the same).

Momma is still Momma. Of course, she didn't seem like herself for a while after the divorce. Not because of the divorce itself, but because of her new boyfriend. She lives with him now, and that's where my 'home' is now, when I leave for breaks from college. He was a little too perfect when I first met him, and she texted him a little too much when I went to visit her. Seeing a new romance was weird. Seeing Alex freeze up when I mention Momma is weird. But it's fine now. It's even okay. I think I might hate the word 'okay'.

CHRISTIANITY REFERENCES IN ALICE MUNRO'S "BOYS AND GIRLS"

Ally Balan

Christian elements embedded into Alice Munro's short stories are a reoccurring topic of discussion in my FYS101 class at Butler University. Story after story, somebody has made an intelligent discovery that leads to further examination about the uncanny relationships between Munro's everyday characters' ordinary lives and their allusion to certain biblical myths. Perhaps the most notable story that alludes to Christianity is "Boys and Girls," a story about a maturing, naïve female that comes to accept what it means to be a "girl" in society. Several of Munro's stories explore and examine the pain and necessity of innocent children choosing sides, which ultimately impacts their future lives. "Boys and Girls" is no exception; the pinnacle of the story arises when the narrator decides to disobey her father for the first time. This simple decision lends support to the argument that the narrator deliberately chooses to alter her father's view of her, and therefore, is ready to accept the drastic changes that come as a consequence. This overall moral conflict adverts to how Christians believe God views each of them and will eventually judge their fate at the end of their lives. "Boys and Girls" from *Dance of the Happy Shades* reveals that Alice Munro is not only a talented storyteller in terms of pure entertainment, but also a writer of depth and complexity, in which even the smallest details of her carefully chosen diction hold some level of symbolic and religious meaning.

Although the narrator remains unnamed throughout the story, Munro is careful to include subtle details that provide groundbreaking evidence when further investigated. Readers can appreciate the fact that Munro purposefully named the brother Laird, which means 'Lord,' or a titled gentleman. This synonym plays an important role in the story as the young girl experiences society's unwritten gender rules forced upon her. With no initial perception of gender roles, the narrator believes she is allowed to do anything her brother can do without any backlash from society. When the feed salesman belittles the narrator by accusing that she is "only a girl" (Munro 116), the narrator is introduced to the notion of male superiority.

Throughout history, the Christian church has prided itself on being a very patriarchal society. The hierarchical theology has placed women under men's authority in many aspects of religion, including the sacrament of marriage and within the church itself. Historically, it has excluded women from church leadership positions and continues to refuse the acceptance of females to the Catholic priesthood. Munro utilizes society's unfair exclusions to shine light on the denial felt by the narrator.

Expanding on the theme of the hierarchy, one can view the Christian doctrine of the Holy Trinity as a system of superior power. As Flora escapes, Laird calls out for his father to bring him on the empowering journey. This is the verbal moment when Laird professes his recognition of his sex-determined superiority. When all seen together, the father, Henry, and Laird are so powerful that they are unable to be stopped. After the three men have passed, the narrator shuts the gate with both a sense of defeat and pride. They have gone beyond the gate into a world where the older men will commit a barbaric act and Laird will witness death firsthand. Just as the curious Adam and Eve were exposed to the dangerous world after disobeying God, Laird is no longer in the safe, innocent environment he was once so accustomed to. He has consciously chosen to act the way he did and now he must live with the consequences, regardless of the possible regret he may feel later on. The power of the three male characters in the story significantly suppresses the women, leading the narrator to feel weak and alone.

The setting also provides evidence of Christian inspiration. The narrator mentions the town of Jubilee twice throughout the story. The Hebrew word 'jubilee' translates into "a ram's horn" or "trumpet," which is blown with the intentions of exclamation. In Judaism and Christianity, the concept of the Jubilee is a special year of the remission of sins and debts. During this year of universal pardoning, all of the enslaved and imprisoned were granted freedom as a chance for a new beginning. The land that had been taken by others as a result of unpaid debts was returned back to the original owners (Wellman). This relates back to Flora, who was given the chance to escape a gruesome situation. Although she was lucky enough to run free, the narrator knew it was only a matter of time before the horse was rightfully returned back to her father— dead or alive. The narrator also describes her fantasies of riding "spiritedly down the main street of Jubilee, acknowledging the townspeople's gratitude" (Munro 113) for her heroic acts she performs in her nightly stories. This scene directly parallels to the story told by Christians on Psalm Sunday, in which Jesus makes his triumphal entry into Jerusalem on a donkey. The crowd exalts in his glory, proclaiming 'Hosanna,' which means "save now" (Zavada). The setting may seem like a minor detail at first glance, but in reality, the choice of location Munro made provides a great deal of significance to the story.

Throughout the Bible, God can be seen using dreams and visions to communicate with people on Earth. In these almost supernatural dreams,

God reveals His plan, how to further His plan, and other information that is unavailable elsewhere. In "Boys and Girls," the narrator tells herself stories before going to bed each night. Although these stories are not dreams while she is asleep, they symbolize fantasies of worlds in which the narrator wishes she lived. In her initial dream sequences, the narrator explains the stories took place in a world that was recognizably her own, just as Jesus was placed on Earth in the image and likeness of man. In his hour of death, Jesus was named 'King of the Jews,' provoking the idea that he owned a part of the world in which he lived. The narrator admits that her stories are filled with "opportunities for courage, boldness, and self-sacrifice" (Munro 113), which parallels to the challenging life Jesus willingly endured. Just as Jesus was sent to Earth to sacrifice his life to save the sinners from their sins, the narrator dreamed of saving others from horrific situations too. The interesting parallels between the almighty biblical figure and this ordinary girl creates proof that Munro desired to include thought-provoking ideas for her readers to formulate.

When exploring Christianity in literature, one can rarely conclude without discovering a revelation about some two opposite elements in the story that allude to Heaven and Hell. Within the title alone, readers can note many instances of contrasting details in "Boys and Girls." Munro allows for a fairly obvious contrast between the roles that the males and females play in the story to expose the pressures of society's expectations. Just as children normally are, the two youths begin the story frightened by the dark. However, these children do not display the typical fear of the unknown. They find comfort in Henry Bailey's distinctive sinister laugh. The whistling and gurgling of his heckling reminds them of the "warm, safe, brightly lit downstairs world" (Munro 112) that could be compared to Heaven. Although the narrator classifies this world as the floor below them and Christians associate God's paradise with being superior to the human world, the description of the safe place evokes pleasant feelings of comfort. The narrator is happiest in the company of others, in presence of the bright lights. The literary diction Munro uses to describe the heavenly atmosphere causes readers to sympathize and relate to the narrator's desire for security in times of fear and the unknown.

On the other hand, the upstairs, where the two sleep, is depicted as a dark place with a "stale" and "cold" atmosphere (Munro 112). Because Hell is often identified with images of bright, hot, fiery flames and constant torment, the narrator supports the suggestion of the upstairs being more Purgatory-like than Hell-like. By describing the area dedicated to the miscellaneous objects the family does not have any use for, the narrator reveals the nothingness she feels from being upstairs. The undesirable items are used to symbolize the people doomed to eternal damnation. Munro makes special mention of one of the rejected household items being a picture of the Battle of Balaclava.

This particular battle was fought during the Crimean War, a war that was a result of religious differences between Russia and France over the privileges of the Russian Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches in Palestine. The narrator also makes note that the upstairs is not finished yet. This incompleteness further alludes to the popular Christian belief that those who die without having fulfilled the temporary punishment due to their sins must spend time in the intermediate place between Heaven and Hell. The narrator goes on to describe a theory she has that escaped convicts hide among the unused objects. To pass from downstairs to upstairs, one must descend down the stairs and vice versa. Munro focuses on these symbolic levels of descending and ascending to determine the satisfaction and comfort the narrator feels.

“Boys and Girls” as a whole, as well as the details, can be seen as a symbolic reiteration of many classic biblical stories and Christian ideals. Munro offers many instances of character examinations to offer a deep moral meaning in terms of the practice of Christianity. Munro has deliberately managed to incorporate some of the most pivotal biblical events and critical truths of the Christian faith in a mere seventeen pages of story about an ordinary farm family. This keen sense and ability to embed insidious literary allusions into her literary, further proves that the talented Alice Munro develops her stories with complexity in mind.

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PRISONER OF MY OWN EGO: THIS IS MY EGO SPEAKING

Jessica Lee

4:17 a.m. — Dream State

Inhale. Exhale. Quickly! My breaths feel irregular — one quick puff, hold another for two seconds, then seven rapid gasps — but my lungs expand and compress on the irregular beats, delivering oxygen to my pumping limbs and pulsating heart. I reach behind my shoulder and suddenly there's an arrow in my hand and the forest ground stops moving beneath my feet as I fit the arrow to the bow, smoothly pulling the quill to the corner of my mouth. I instinctively know what to aim for: between the pale eyes. A difficult target because of the white, bushy eyebrows furrowed around it, obscuring my view. But I let the arrow fly anyways. *Thrum*.

Abruptly, without warning, the arrow flies toward me. Did it spin? Flip around? I have no time to ponder this, and caught off guard, I can only stand still, the oxygen no longer willing my body to move. Then I see it. An apple. On the arrow's head. And it's still speeding...

6:00 a.m. — Beep. Beep. Beep.

What is happening? *Beep, beep, beep*. Something so disorientating, but maybe, just maybe, if it's ignored... *beep, beep, beep*... it's almost rhythmic, peaceful, over and over... *beep, beep, beep*... and "if I went back to sleep for another while and forgot all this foolishness" — all this *beep, beep, beep* — "but that was totally out of the question" because there it went again.¹ *Beep, bee* — no! It must be stopped. It can't be. Morning already? First class, second class, from one hard chair to another, class, class, class... the thought sickens me. What if I just stayed? Here, in the warmth of these covers with no sunlight rising through the blinds quite yet, and surely Mom and Dad would understand because they must have been in my position before — the morning when the dawning thought of getting out of bed was just absolutely too depressing.

How many hours of sleep did I get last night? Five? Six? "People must have their sleep" to think properly and my thoughts can't be orderly because now I'm thinking of my agenda for the day, calculating the exact minutes of my shower to be on time, and well, technically I missed that opportunity, but it's okay because that's what dry shampoo is for, and I'll have to make a mad dash across campus.² God, I need help. I need coffee.

6:30 a.m. — Caffeinated

Ah! Power coursing through my veins! I can conquer the world — where should I begin? Russia? No, no, Russia is always a bad idea. I think instead of my roommates still in bed and in their own respective dream states — all blissful and heart-warming, I'm sure — as I sit in class. Maybe I should try that. Just once, to sleep in... “Anyway, who knows whether that wouldn't be a good thing for me after all,” a definite change to the morning of class, class, class.³ Listening to a man perched on his desk — a peculiar habit of his — while we sit down below.

Maybe if I tell Mom and Dad, that it is sucking the life out of me, slowly but surely, they would have to understand. And of course, not literally sucking the oxygen out of my lungs, but it might as well be because what good is this oxygen — carried in my blood and delivered to my heart and brain and limbs — if my limbs will only occasionally raise a hand, my brain uselessly staring at him while my heart, well, what exactly does the heart do in a classroom? But they wouldn't understand as the older generation never does, and if it weren't for my parents, I would have marched up to him a long time ago and “let my heart out to him.”⁴ My heart, my true desire to explore the vast ocean — not the literal ocean, I would tell him, but something just as vast and expansive and unknown — and to never come back. But my God, look at the time! I'm going to be late for class.

7:00 a.m. — Class SF_351-PP_SEC08

He informs me that I'm late as I walk in, perched on his desk. I want to snap at him — the caffeine is still bubbling through my veins, you see — and inform *him* that I've never been late before and this morning, I woke up just a bit more lethargic, almost not quite myself, and honestly, I'm not feeling well, because what other explanation is there?

I fantasize myself telling him this and inwardly cringe at his imaginary response: we “very often simply have to overcome a slight indisposition out of regard for the” University and “your performance recently has been most unsatisfactory.”⁵ I would try to explain it's not a “slight indisposition” that can be easily disregarded because I've never woken up with such strange thoughts before, with such striking sickness toward the class. I would try to point toward my rather satisfactory performance, but what's the point, the end goal of that so-called satisfactory performance if it's overshadowed by such miniscule tardiness? I cannot imagine a good outcome, so I just take a seat.

In my seat — much lower than I remember it being — I am suddenly hit with a desire to blurt another discovery. How have I never noticed it before? That man needs a haircut. Badly. Not just on his head,

where his dark mop flops over his ears so untidily it's a miracle he can hear himself talk (which I'm not entirely convinced he can, evidenced by the amount of times he repeats himself), but his beard too. Can he eat without also consuming hairballs? Or without a crumb from last night's dinner? He constantly "plucks uneasily at [his] beard" which was annoyingly a different shade from his white, bushy eyebrows always drawn heavily over his pale eyes — eyes that were currently boring straight at me.⁶ I look away.

In the middle of class, he assigns a group activity, and I want to protest and raise picket signs. I somehow lose myself to another fantasy where I petition for a more cheerful assignment or even delegate the work evenly among my group members. I imagine what would happen: I'd grow hives, most likely, at the thought of dismissing an assignment for a simpler, more cheerful one. Cheerful? More like petty. I take these assignments very seriously; they are not meant to be cheerful. Maybe I could delegate the work evenly among my group members... I'd "get sick at the very prospect" and possibly even have an aneurysm.⁷ Shaking off any other possibility, I know, as always, I would "in the end, go over all the figures and calculations" myself, and thus my peers — if you could call them that, as peers suggest equals whereas I am far superior — are of little help to me.⁸

I think it's the caffeine that caused such bizarre hallucinations — two in a row! — so I decide to stay quiet instead, allowing the caffeine to simmer and fade.

9:00 a.m. — Class FYS_102_SEC43

Does this story make any sense? It's absolutely ridiculous, unfathomable. Gregor Samsa wakes and all he can worry about is getting to work on time? Work, work, work. No thoughts about coffee, or even doubts about going to work at all! Furthermore, his boss (his peculiar desk-sitting habit sounds oddly familiar), family, and heavily-bearded lodgers are all atrocious. If I were in that situation, I'd give them a piece of my mind.

What is Gregor so scared of? It's like he has a miniature President Snow in his mind, killing off any and every rebellious thought by manipulatively containing his spark of hope from bursting into flame. Gregor's spark of hope — the mere possibility of paying off his parents' debt, sending his sister to the conservatory, letting his heart out to his boss — are "ill-defined hopes, all of which led to the conclusion that for the time being he had to stay calm."⁹ "Ill-defined," of course, simply because he refused to take control of them and so they never became explicit. If his hope burst into flames, Gregor would snatch up a bow and arrow, and shoot President Snow between his ridiculously bushy eyebrows — a show of power and control. Instead, he remains calm and constantly worries about work, work, work — never mind that he has a rotting apple in his back (*gross*).

And what's wrong with the rest of the Samsa family? Gregor thinks of them all as incapable inferiors — his father “couldn't be expected to overexert himself,” his mother a “victim of asthma,” and his sister “still a child.”¹⁰ If only he'd just share the burden of providing for the family, Gregor would realize they're all perfectly capable human beings and not, in fact, too old or too young.

10:30 p.m. — Finally. Bedtime.

Now, after the day's exhausting work, this morning seemed full of odd thoughts, so hazy and vague that it is impossible to remember them, but they're lodged in my mind, like... an apple stuck, there to stay and rot because I couldn't very well shoot it. A constant reminder of earlier thoughts, angry thoughts — they were angry, right? Angry and tired and frustrated at something, something just out of mind's reach, but sleep's lure pulls at the edges until I can hardly feel the rotten apple at all, and maybe I had just imagined the whole thing anyways. An apple in my mind? I obviously need rest. It had been a real exhausting day, full of classes, classes, classes... oh! Almost forgot. Need to set the alarm. 6:00 a.m.

Notes

1. Kafka, *The Metamorphosis*, 11
2. Kafka, *The Metamorphosis*, 12
3. Kafka, *The Metamorphosis*, 12
4. Kafka, *The Metamorphosis*, 12
5. Kafka, *The Metamorphosis*, 17
6. Kafka, *The Metamorphosis*, 46
7. Kafka, *Poseidon*, 1
8. Kafka, *Poseidon*, 1
9. Kafka, *The Metamorphosis*, 26
10. Kafka, *The Metamorphosis*, 30

A NEW HOME

Reid Richmond

I do not remember much about when I moved to California, but I do have enough memories that will stick with me for the rest of my life, that have shaped the person I am and will become.

In August of 2001, my family and I moved to California, from Texas, to take care of my dying grandfather. My aunt, who lived in the adjacent city, couldn't take care of him because she said she'd had to take care of my grandmother and it was my mom's turn to take care of someone. My grandmother died September 15, 1997, six weeks before I was born, as a result of her second stroke. My grandfather said, from that point on, he intended to smoke and drink himself to death. He had smoked and drunk prior to this event, but he just decided, when my grandmother died, to kick it up a notch.

I was three at the time of the move, but I was about to turn four in October. My grandfather was a heavy smoker and an alcoholic. He was suffering from emphysema and cirrhosis of the liver. When I knew him, he was nothing but miserable and difficult to deal with. I do not remember any time when he was nice to me, but I am sure there was one in the two-year period I lived with him. Don't get me wrong, he never beat me or hurt me in any physical way, he just would say the meanest things.

For example, when I was younger, I could not say my 'R's' correctly and they sounded like 'W's'. He would mock this and snidely ask, "Where did you learn to talk? The Elmer Fudd School of Diction?" Elmer Fudd is a Looney Tunes character. He used his famous line, "You Wacally Wabbit!" when he was trying to hunt Bugs Bunny.

One day my grandpa lit his cigarette and started to smoke it. The cigarette burned more and more, and I didn't understand why it was shrinking, so my four-year old mind thought that he was eating the cigarette, and I asked him, "Grandpa, why are you eating your cigarette?"

"I'm not eating it god-damn-it!" he yelled.

My mom then came to my defense, and I promptly asked her another question. "When are we going home?"

"This is home now," she responded.

I was shocked and heartbroken because, for me, Texas was home, and I couldn't understand, and didn't want to comprehend or imagine the possibility of calling this new situation home. I repeatedly, day after day, asked her this same question, hoping and wishing that maybe she was joking or would have changed her mind, but her answer never changed as I hoped it would.

A couple of months after the cigarette-eating incident, I saw my grandfather reading the newspaper. Again, I was four and I did not realize that people's eyelids would partially close if they were looking down at something to read it. I then asked him, "Grandpa, why are you asleep?"

"I'm not sleeping, I'm reading!" he screamed.

My dad saved me this time, and calmed down my grandpa. As you can tell there was a theme as to what got me in trouble with my grandfather.

My grandfather was not always like this. My mom tells me stories about him all the time. The man she talks about is not the man that I came to know. He was born in 1930 in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. He met a Welsh nurse in Nanaimo, British Columbia, would end up marrying her six weeks after their initial meeting, and this would be my grandmother. They would have two daughters, Mary Ann (my mom) and Megan (my aunt). He moved his family to California when my mom was 15. He would get a job teaching a reading class to prospective teachers at Whittier College, where both of his daughters, my mom and my aunt, would end up attending. He was intellectually brilliant and charismatic, but, because of his sarcastic and caustic brand of humor, was not the most loved person in the world. My grandmother suffered a stroke early in 1997 and later that year, died as a result of her second stroke. My grandfather was absolutely devastated and at her funeral, made his terrifying suicide pact with himself.

When I moved to California, he made some good progress with his pact. He could never breathe, was on an oxygen machine twenty-four hours a day, but would still smoke cigarettes. When he had to go to the bathroom he couldn't make it because moving at any pace was so physically exhausting for him. I don't need to say what happened, but suffice it to say that he would not accept the responsibility for the accident, he would proceed to blame our dog for the mess. I didn't understand what was happening to him and I just thought he was the biggest jerk on the face of this planet. I couldn't possibly understand how miserable he was and the fact that he was a jerk was because he was suffering so much emotional pain and depression, that he lashed out at anyone and anything that gave him half a chance to do so.

In June 2003, my grandfather was in the hospital and had been for quite a while. The doctors did not give us a great deal of hope for his recovery. That night my mom prayed to God to do something definitive; either let my grandfather be healed miraculously or let him die. The next day, when we were at my cousin's high school graduation, he died. It was finally over. He no longer had to suffer. There was a silent beauty in his death. He had wanted to die for six years, and he had suffered for every minute of those six years and he finally got what he wished for.

At his funeral, I was restless. I couldn't stay still, and my mom and dad would tell me to stop wiggling in my spot on the pew. For me the funeral was never ending and I just could not stop moving, no matter how much I was told to stop. I also distinctly remember walking in the cemetery where he would be buried and I stepped on someone's headstone. I got quite the scolding for that one. He is now buried next to his wife, at her side, where he wanted to be all along.

I am not describing someone that I hate or I have no feelings towards, but I am describing a man that I have forgiven as I try to understand what he went through. I find myself constantly thinking about him, and wondering, if he had been healthy, whether he would have liked me. I wonder if he would be pleased with what I have accomplished. Would he and my grandmother be happy to see what I have done and where I'm at today? Are they happy with what my future holds? The truth is that I am sometimes brought to tears when I think of these questions, and I wish I'd had a little more time with all of my grandparents because I did not know any of them except for my mom's dad.

Even though those two years with him were not the best or the easiest, it's helped shape me into who I am today. I cannot imagine calling anywhere else home except for California. California has become my home and a place that, no matter where my future takes me, I will always have a special place for in my heart. All of my friends live there and most of my family is in California. My grandpa has taught me a lot about myself. I have learned that I never want to smoke and I saw firsthand what could happen when you do smoke. It's traumatizing to a degree, for everyone involved. He acted very selfishly. My parents raised me to treat others how you want to be treated and just try to be the best person you can be. Be respectful and keep others as well as yourself in mind. My grandfather was addicted. His addiction, in and of itself, was selfish. He wanted to kill himself, and didn't think of his family before he decided to do anything. He thought of himself and his pain, not the pain that his loss would cause his family. This bothers me even until this day. He drank and smoked without any care for his living family, the people he raised and his grandchildren. Maybe he wouldn't have been so miserable if he decided not to swallow his feelings with his beer.

I don't want to end up like him, because I want to be there for my family, no matter the circumstance, and I've seen it happen, it would be all too easy to turn to a substance to numb the pain and put you in a happy place. I don't want my family to have to forgive me for what I have done in this life. I want my legacy to reflect the happiness I brought my family and to be remembered in a good light.

WHAT A TIME TO BE ALIVE: THE PHILOSOPHICAL
UNDERPINNINGS OF HEIDEGGER AND NIETZSCHE IN *THE*
POSTMORTAL

Jaclyn Boyer

The revolutionary thinker William Penn once wrote, “Time is what we want most, but what we use worst” (Penn). Mankind curses and mourns time’s passing yet we do not seize it in the present. Instead of taking advantage of time, we tend to deceive ourselves into thinking that we are going to live forever, or at least long enough to accomplish all we want in life. So when we get to the end of our time, whether it is in a day, in a certain stage of life, or in our entire existence, we would do anything to just have more time.

In Drew Magary’s novel, *The Postmortal* (2011), he describes a futuristic society, which has developed a “cure” for humanity’s shortcoming, with the promise of infinite time, immortality. However, as we observe through the never-ending life of the protagonist, John, immortality proves to be more of a problem than a solution, as he is forced to witness the deaths of all of his loved ones, which causes his life to transform into a meaningless expanse of time. Therefore, with the struggles the protagonist endures as a result of his immortality, Magary’s novel provokes philosophical thought about the relationship among time, religion, and humanity.

German philosopher Martin Heidegger claimed that the pressing knowledge of the inevitability of death completes the existence of man, while Friedrich Nietzsche proposed that as time progresses, man will shift away from religion and toward rationalism. While Magary’s *The Postmortal* is commonly read in First-Year Seminar courses due to its presentation of pressing societal issues, the text raises philosophical questions regarding the status quo of humanity that begs the reader to excavate the hidden philosophical, theological and epistemological messages looming beneath the lines of the text.

In Martin Heidegger’s profoundly important work, *Being and Time*, he seeks to explain the meaning of being as well as the problems of existence. Heidegger refers to the human existence with a term he created, Dasein, which can be roughly translated from German as ‘existence.’ He talks extensively about the elements of the Dasein that constitute its existence, as

well as the elements of necessity in order for Dasein to exist and live as it is meant to. Particularly, Heidegger stresses the importance of Death, claiming that, “Death completes Dasein’s existence” (Wheeler). However, since an individual cannot possibly experience their own death, Heidegger supports his argument by claiming that the Dasein has the ability to understand death through experiencing the death of others as well as by acknowledging that Dasein’s own death is inevitable, the “possibility of the impossibility of an existence at all” (*Being and Time* 53: 307). Therefore, Heidegger is arguing that not only is the realization of Death a crucial component of the existence of mankind, but also that this awareness of an omnipresent Death “illuminates” the individual, stating, “When I take on board the possibility of my own not-Being, my own being-able-to-Be is brought into proper view” (Wheeler). It is this concept of being-able-to-Be that is presented subtly in the cracks of *The Postmortal*.

Heidegger’s argument that the possibility of Death essentially betters the existence of Dasein is highlighted in *The Postmortal* as Magary portrays the consequences of living a life of infinite time. With the above quote about not-Being bringing the being-able-to-Be into “proper view,” Heidegger is essentially claiming that Death is a driving force that gives us meaning in our lives. Therefore, if that possibility of not-being is removed, or in the case of this Postmortal society, cured, individuals freed of the inevitability of Death tend to live meaningless lives. Magary demonstrates the dangers of living a meaningless life through the transformation of John’s life after he gets the cure. Slowly, we see John’s life progress towards having no purpose as he quits his job, refuses to marry his true love, and decides not to be in his son’s life. Also, because he has given his life infinite time, he cruelly subjects himself to witnessing the death of every person he loves since while the cure freezes a body at its cure age, it does not guarantee immortality through invincibility.

He experiences the death of others, while ignoring the possibility of his own, therefore not completely, but rather hindering his existence as well as exposing the dangerous shortcoming of the cure, “people mistakenly hoped the cure would end not only death but also the anguish of processing death... [but] they have to spend much longer dealing with their grief” (Magary 262). Consequently, living long enough to experience so much Death and living without meaning, ultimately drives John to desperately find some purpose in his life, which leads him to a life of immorality. Since the ultimate consequence, death, is no longer a pressing issue and all meaning diminishes with time, John has no choice but to turn to immoral living as it is the only thing left. Near the end of the novel, after he has lost the last person he loved and has nothing left in life, John agrees to become a hard end specialist, saying, “I have my purpose,” (Magary 292) which is to kill people. In terms of Heidegger’s thinking, this could be a way for John to force an awareness of

Dasein onto himself. By making a career out of bringing people to their deaths, John is constantly exposing himself to Death, face to face with the Dasein.

Another philosophical underlying of Heidegger's modern thinking demonstrated in *The Postmortal*, is the questioning of traditional values. Since within the Postmortal society, the "cure" enables individuals to live without the possibility of Death looming over their entire lives, we are able to truly see the lives they willingly chose to live. Therefore, the initial desires and actions of the individuals with the cure bring to light philosophical concerns about the free will of mankind. Throughout the novel, the status quo is constantly being questioned as traditional values such as going to college, getting married, having a family, and working up until retirement become restraints to one's free will. With all of the time in the world, these individuals no longer desire to accomplish milestones in life, but just want to party. This is demonstrated in the chapter when John and his friends go to Vegas. Although this chapter may make readers initially think that John and his friends are simply wasting their life away partying, the chapter actually shows philosophical depth as it symbolizes true human nature. John claims that this infinite amount of time, "just means you have more time to do what you enjoy or find what you enjoy" (Magary 39). So if this is true, then it seems that the genuine nature of man is not to enjoy the traditional values we hold so dear now, but to enjoy a life free from these values, escaping them. Since these Postmortal individuals have an infinite amount of time to do what they enjoy in life, they decide to do the opposite of what we think constitutes a "life well lived" now. This idea challenges the way we define a "good" life today. Thus the horrifying possibility emerges that maybe we, as a society, have constructed a way of living that is not how we are intended to live. In the mortal society we presently live in, it seems life is a race in which we are hastily trying to fit everything we are "supposed" to have into our life span before our time runs out. The inevitability of our death, or finite time can be seen as a way to manipulate us into becoming slaves to societal standards, as we feel when we reach a certain age or stage in our lives, we have to have a certain life event completed or else we have failed to live a "good" life.

Therefore, one could argue against Heidegger and say that Death is not a necessity for completing the human existence, but rather hinders it, and is just a way to keep humanity in line.

Magary expresses this idea by literally titling one of the chapters in his novel, "Death is the only thing keeping us in line." However, the chapter is not exclusively about Death, but rather the relationship between Death and religion, "religion as insurance against death" (Magary 13). What this chapter introduces, and what we will observe throughout the rest of the novel, is that Death and religion are synonymous in that they are ways, though one is

natural and the other is constructed to keep individuals in line, specifically within the status quo. This concern Magary provokes alludes to the thoughts of the German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, who is famously recognized for rejecting traditional philosophical reasoning by claiming that, “God is dead,” specifically “in the hearts and minds of modern men” (Friedrich). Nietzsche believed that values are essential for the survival and growth of humanity but argued that; “the exemplary human being must craft his own identity through self-realization and do so without relying on anything transcending that life—such as God” (Friedrich). Therefore, Nietzsche controversially named mankind as the killer of God, for as time goes on, and new ideas about science and knowledge as a whole emerge, traditional beliefs will be challenged, resulting in a societal shift away from faith and towards rationalism. However, Nietzsche also warns that this ending of long-established values that set standards for morality and purpose, will lead to the dangerous emergence of a nihilistic society. A society which although lives without the constraints of faith, also lives with a belief in nothing, living essentially a meaningless life.

Nietzsche’s thoughts regarding the relationship among time, religion, and man are emphasized in *The Postmortal* by the corruptness and dangerousness of the Church of Man. In this futuristic world, science has advanced so greatly that individuals now have the power to essentially freeze time, putting off Death, and therefore making the concept of religion obsolete. Magary expresses this idea that Death does not only keep us in line but also provides meaning to religion, by the pleading words of the pope, “Death is what makes us humble before God—knowing that our lives will come to an end and that when the end arrives we will be forced to answer for them” (Magary 12). But now that the advancement of the cure has prolonged death, the cure gets rid of the value of faith and a belief in God, demonstrating what Nietzsche referred to as the societal shift from faith to rationalism that caused the death of God. In *The Postmortal*, I think Magary shows this shift with the emergence of the Church of Man. Now that this society has shifted towards rationalism or something tangible to believe in, themselves, there is no need to worship a God, for the cure essentially makes the post mortals their own God.

The death of God is supported by Nietzsche’s idea that as time goes on, values will continue to be brought into question that were once thought as “absolute.” However, Nietzsche also states that, “the acceptance that God is dead will also involve the ending of long-established standards of morality and of purpose,” (Friedrich) resulting in the emergence of a nihilistic society. Nietzsche warns about Nihilism, or a belief in nothing, for it will leave people to live their life with no purpose, which is reminiscent of Heidegger’s philosophical ideas. Therefore, Nietzsche proposes that a new set of values are established by the creation of the “Superman.” He saw the “Superman” as

the answer to nihilistic rejection of all religious principles, a hero “that reflects the strength and independence of one who is liberated from all values” (Friedrich). In parallel with Nietzsche’s idea of the “Superman,” Magary creates the Church of Man in which the members do not worship God, but rather themselves, deviating from the status quo. When trying to convert John to the church, his son David says that, “[the church] teaches us that the goodness and selflessness of man will always rise to the surface,” (Magary 216). This supports Nietzsche’s stance that when religion becomes obsolete, then the exemplary human can emerge, however as we see throughout the novel, this is not in fact how the Church of Man acts. As Magary demonstrates, it does not matter if you get rid of religion and its constraints, because true human nature will always find a way to emerge. The Church of Man preaches that it highlights the goodness of mankind and enables its members to live freely, yet because they are human, they still find ways to control others, limiting what their members can eat, drink, and do with their lives.

In conclusion, while Magary’s *The Postmortal* is typically read among first-year college students because of its presentation of current societal issues, the text contains underlying philosophical messages that bring into question the status quo of humanity. Martin Heidegger proposed that the existence of man is not complete without Death, or at least the impending knowledge of one’s own death. Friedrich Nietzsche predicted that the death of God comes about when a society has become so scientifically advanced that it shifts away from faith towards rationalism. Throughout the novel, Magary presents these issues through the immortal, drawn out life of the protagonist. John questions the status quo in nearly every aspect, including marriage, career, family, and religion. Although in some ways this deviation from the status quo can be liberating, what we see as a result in the novel, is that John lives a tragic and meaningless life. What Magary may be highlighting here, is that society’s constructed status quo, like Death and religion, may constrict humanity, but it is necessary. For without the set status quo, life becomes this great abyss without any light to guide us in the right direction.

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A CALL TO THE PORTLAND JR. FIRE DEPARTMENT

Hannah Hurt

We celebrated too early. With fireworks and flame in the cold December night. We commenced in an open field, empty except for an old red car, our means of transportation, and ourselves. The cows in the pasture over occasionally could be heard along with the small stream in the woods. The ashes of our last celebration still remain there and we were soon to add more.

It was maybe around ten on New Year's Eve. We had found some fireworks leftover from the Fourth of July. We figured what better way to celebrate than with explosives. We grabbed blankets and jackets, loaded the fireworks into a tailgate, and divided our ranks between an ATV and the truck. The field was a short drive behind Seth's house and behind his small patch of woods--technically walkable but not desirable in the cold and the dark. Behind the sanction of field is a cow pasture and a few crumbling barns with hay bales hugging their sides. The field was empty except for a rusted red car and a massive brush pile. It was a common place for us to have bonfires and even pitch tents. Every star could be seen from the field if it was a clear night, and tonight was no exception.

We laughed and shouted, some running around in the dead grass, others huddling for warmth. It had been a warm winter and now the sudden cold crippled some and energized others. And amongst the energy sparked light. Green, red, orange, and yellow shot from the roman candles. The car became the target as it has been before.

This is not the first attack on the car. It once had a purpose and saw many miles, but age turned it into nothing more than a mass of red scrap metal with gas tank and engine removed. In July, we busted the car with a baseball bat. I swung at rearview mirrors and watched glass shatter to my feet. Chandler busted out the right headlight where a wasps' nest lay and was stung while the rest of us ran and took shelter. He cursed and then threw the bat into the back window, where we left it stuck upright like a knife in a piece of meat.

We found trashed nostalgia that hinted at who the previous owner may have been. That was when we caught the car on fire the first time. With bottle rockets and purple smoke bombs, we had started a fire in the back seat. It was small and manageable, and was put out within a matter of seconds.

A few months later, the car added bullet holes to the windowless, rusted body. It lay there innocent and helplessly as Seth shot automatic round after round into its metal siding. The sounds of gunshots hitting metal reverberated through the autumn chilled and still green field.

We had no intention of setting the car on fire, it was essentially an accident. Someone had shot a roman candle through the same hole that the bat had left in the back windshield and it landed into the air ventilator. It started just as a little glow. Garret and I took the ATV back to the house. We merely grabbed water bottles. On a second thought, we grabbed a fire extinguisher for extra safety. We didn't realize how quickly the fire had spread until we started to head back to the field and could see the flames through the woods 300 yards away. Garret slowed down the ATV then, knowing our ample water source was of no help anymore.

When we arrived, some were just watching while some were running around the flames. Garret and I dumped the water and extinguisher into a pile on a quilt in the grass. Garret ran to the aid of those around the fire, and I joined sides by those who watched. I don't know when, but someone grabbed our meager supplies. All the water in the few water bottles we grabbed had been dumped to no avail. The plastic bottles left to melt amongst the metal. Evan ran around the car in a trail of white exhaust in hopes that the fire extinguisher would somehow do some good. "*Sole member of the Portland Jr. Fire Department*" he screamed, covering his mouth and eyes from the heat and smoke.

Jordan found this funny and ran to the car. She began to sing in chants and dance as if she was a power warrioress reenacting her fight. Her long pixie haircut flopping around her face as she moved her body. Evan and Seth joined.

Then, there was the first explosion. All of us girls screamed at the guys to step away from the fire but they were like moths to a light. The heat was becoming too much for the tires. They exploded in a loud pop, as their air pressure couldn't fight any more, and sent the surrounding flames in whatever the direction of its burst. We watched, as one by one all four popped.

Unlike July, we couldn't put out the flames this time. The night was dark and cold, but the heat from the car kept us all to warm while the black plumes of smoke still managed to penetrate the night.

We were now defeated. There was nothing we could do but watch the car burn. The poisonous fumes were now traveling to our lungs and made our eyes sting. Jordan, the hippie friend who is so environmentally conscious that she does not even allow us to burn water bottles in our typical bonfires, was starting to worry that we will all now probably catch lung cancer of some sorts because have all inhaled burning plastic, metal, fabric, and whatever else.

We all piled into Garret's truck, and sat listening to music as the fire continued. We listened to "Disco Inferno," "Ring of Fire," and other songs in memoriam of the car. We sat until the windows fogged up, wiped them clean, opened the doors to help ventilate the air for a moment, and then we would do the same thing over again. Finally, we left when only a faint glow remained. The next morning, a new day and a new year, the metal skeleton was all that was left.

THE ROOT OF APATHY

Alfred Johnson

I used to hate myself. I hated my name, because it was the same as my father's. I hated my height, it was stagnant and I always felt like more of a joke than a person. I hated my house and everything that lived in it, mainly because I was the only guy and after all of the "Alfred hate" (my father, of course) I found myself feeling even more misplaced than I would at school. I spent the first 7 years of my life in Hessville, a town on the "good side" of Hammond, Indiana. When I was there I was the happiest I think I'm emotionally capable of being. I was also extremely stable at the time. My family was poor, but we made things work. We'd eat canned tuna, pork and beans with crackers, or Ramen noodles every day, but we'd enjoy it regardless because we were able to eat together. My mother and father would take turns walking all four of us to school and sometimes we'd all just walk together as a family. We all did well in school and rarely argued or went days without talking to each other. Our situation was fine until our dad gambled with the bank (real life) and we ended up losing our Hammond house after filing bankruptcy. My dad always had money, and within a week before we were supposed to leave, he had already moved us to a house in Gary (which to me felt like a third world country). That's where the emotional and mental decline began.

About a year before my dad left he took me with him to the Cadillac dealer. As a way of spiting my mother, who had been driving a Dodge Caravan 1998 since before I was capable of counting, went and bought a Cadillac XLR 2006. As awesome as an achievement as that is, it was a slap in the face to my mother, and it turned out to be a slap in the face to my three sisters and I as well. Having the dad with the cool sports car is an extreme status booster in grade school. However, the car was a two seater and all of us went to four different schools, so nobody cared about me, still. Also, instead of trying to stuff us all into the one passenger seat, he would drive along side us and watch us as we walked to school (yes, this actually happened on several occasions). When there was one of us left (Paris usually, because she was the farthest, but on rare occasions it would be me if she had gotten sick) he'd then drive them to school. This continued for about a year and a half. After

months of intense arguing, he left and moved to Las Vegas. It was as relieving as it was heartbreaking when he left, but I was numb to it all and my mom and sisters anticipated it. Shortly after, my mom held a family meeting in our worn out kitchen and told us, “I found us a better house in Valpo. We might all have to pitch in a little and do some yard work here and there, but it’s going to be much better than this.” Immediately when she said, “yard work” I thought of a cotton field. I was opposed. Surprisingly my sisters, who had fought almost every week cried upon hearing this news. Valparaiso is a much better area geographically than Gary, which has a better education system, and an array of opportunities to occupy you that don’t involve getting punched in the face. To each his or her own, I guess. Unfortunately for my mom, that fell through and we ended up living in a townhouse on the south side of Hammond (which they ironically call East Hammond or East Haiti for some strange reason, but that’s another story). After my final day attending Ernie Pyle Middle School (really just 5th and 6th grades) I walked home alone and met my sisters outside. They were deeply sobbing. All of our remaining items that we left in the house the day before were thrown out on the front lawn, broken, chipped, or completely destroyed. I didn’t notice I was stepping in a pile of broken eggs when I ran up to comfort my sisters, until they told me I had ruined my last pair of decent looking shoes. Later that night we followed the U Haul truck to our new residence.

I always wore bigger clothes because my dad convinced me that I would eventually grow into them. This made me feel like even more of a joke. A big head, accompanied by a distinct voice, generally long shoes, and weight-watchers success level space in my clothes wasn’t a very welcoming look as an adolescent. Along with all of that, I was extremely skinny because I was an extremely picky eater, and I felt as if I was too good for canned tuna and crackers (I still do, by the way). In middle school I was about average height. That didn’t last very long. Teenagers grow like unibrow hair and by the time it was the third week of seventh grade I was still 5’2 and most of my friends were around 5’7 to 5’10. Physically and socially I was left far behind and it offered even more ammunition to the burning fire of hatred I had for myself and my family, due to the genes passed on.

By the time I got to high school I could no longer stand seeing the same people I’d be seeing since 5th grade. I was officially a peon to them and myself. Although I had exceptional grades at Hammond High and a better educational experience in contrast to Eggers Middle School, I knew that I couldn’t continue to go there if I wanted to retain the small ounce of sanity that I had left. Usually being the butt of all jokes, you’re not often subject to disciplinary action, but the one time I did get detention was the straw that broke the camel’s back. On December 11th, 2013 I reached my breaking point at Hammond High. Every week of my birthday is my official “cheat

week.” Like a cheat day in dieting, I legitimately give up on all of my morals.

I get easily irritated when people try to treat me in a different manner than they normally would when the setting changes. Regardless of who you are, if you display a character change towards me just because you’re around different people, I will not take it lightly. A day before my birthday, a girl that I was always nice to because she was often made fun of because of her appearance (they said she looked like a young Josh Peck and the Michelin Man) had the audacity to put her purse in my *assigned* seat. I went over to sit down, and slowly reached down to remove her purse from my seat and she forcefully smacked my hand away. It was one of those loud smacks where everybody turns around and looks at you. One of the students said something like, “damn, she just smacked the shit out of you dude.” And yes, she actually did smack me to the state of teary eyes. That girl was strong. After she slapped my hand I almost instinctively jumped at her and shouted, “what the fuck!” loud enough to shake the substitute teacher out of her seat and to turn the girl’s face as red as Bob the tomato. I proceeded to death stare her as I threw her purse out of my seat. Before I could sit down she put her hand in my chair and told me to go sit somewhere else because she and her friend were holding a confidential conversation. I quickly barked back, “I don’t care about your friend and your conversation. Get your hand out of my chair before I spit on it.”

Of course, I could’ve told the substitute that she was holding my chair hostage, or I could’ve actually sat somewhere else being that the substitute didn’t even take attendance and that I didn’t even want to sit there. I could’ve been the bigger person, but I had been the bigger person for the whole year and every year before. Out of all the people that I refused to be disrespected by, I refused to be disrespected by her the most. She didn’t move her hand, but her face got even redder as her friend encouraged her to do so. I counted backwards from three. I’m not a violent person, but I am extremely witty. I tell really insensitive “jokes” when I’m bothered, and seeing that I didn’t really have much to lose in the moment since I thought the substitute already called the security guard on me. After getting to one, she moved her hand, but it irritated me that it took her that long to move it, so I hurled out minutes worth of insults about her appearance, voice, mannerisms, and family for the remainder of the period. She began crying profusely, but I didn’t care. After I ended up in the office and explained my side of the story, the counselor let me off with a warning, but didn’t even see the girl who bullied me! I was enraged. Looking back on it now, it was a miniscule reason, but it was still big enough to prompt me to change schools. Conveniently, the Hammond Academy for Performing Arts (Morton High School) sent me a letter that I received on the same day as this incident. I didn’t think twice before I accepted the invitation. I was happy to finally escape the customs of “East Hammond” and be school back where I was the happiest.

Everything was coming together. My dad came back home. My oldest sister moved out and became a manager at Jimmy Jazz so she'd always send me new clothes and shoes when I'd bring back a decent report card. My other sisters were happy and I finally partially of wanted to live. At my new school I was instantly popular at my school for everything I got made fun of at my old school. I found that strange being that I was just half a city away from where I attended school before. It was much easier to find friends at Morton because everybody was strange but extremely open to new things. To them, I was the coolest because I came from an area that none of them had ever actually spent a day in, (the bad part of the city) although it was in the same city. The curriculum was much easier to digest at my new school and everything seemed a lot simpler. My girl best friend at the time was strangely infatuated with this "social media famous" local girl. She was a small framed Mexican girl with curly black dense hair, hazelnut coffee creamer colored skin, pearly teeth that were almost perfect (the two front teeth on the bottom were kind of like a peace sign but her other attributes made up for it), and a singing voice was truly amazing. Her regular voice was a little raspy like Mariah Carey. I had better and I didn't really understand the hype around her, but it's always cool to have someone that nobody else can get. I was edgy at the time.

I approached her the next day after school ended while I was walking with Yazmine (the infatuated one) and I honestly was too lazy to make an actual effort to flirt with her so I was just like, "Hey, I'm Alfred and my friend stalks you on Instagram. What's up?" Immediately Yazmine smacked me into the fifth dimension. I wanted to kill her but I was on a mission. Karina instantly busted out in laughter. Struggling to hold a straight face, she asked, "Why'd you just smack him like that? You seem guilty." After hearing Yazmine stumble to arrive at an explanation, she looked back at me and asked, "Aren't you Alfred from Facebook?" I was in. After that we exchanged numbers and we'd meet at each other's lockers after each class. Sometimes we'd ditch our last class of the day, which was later than everyone else's because we were in a performing arts program, and hang out in the gazebo outside of our school's dining hall. One day I ditched basketball practice to hang out with her at her house and surprisingly, she lived on the same street as I grew up on, about 7 houses down. I was ecstatic. Everything was perfect, and although this might seem like a long time, this was only going on for about 2-3 weeks but it meant a lot to me.

The next week I asked her to go see a play with me and before I could finish my sentence she said yes. I asked for 30 dollars from each of my parents on separate occasions in advance for the night. They both said yes. We met up at the theater to watch the incredibly boring *Guare Fest* play. I couldn't stand it by the time we got to the half so we left the play during intermission. She lived three blocks south of the school. Instead of hanging

out at her house or going out to eat, she opted to go to Phromer Park. Phromer Park was known for various crimes, such as robberies, rapes, drug deals, and various shootings (seriously, and this was the good part of the city). What lead me to walk to a pitch-black Phromer Park with terrible phone service and 60 dollars in my pocket? Even at that time I recognized that it was an incredibly witless idea, but when you hate yourself there's really not much to lose anyways. Retracting my joke from earlier, I told the both of them, "If anything happens to come at us, I'm going to be the first one gone." They both broke out in laughter, which prompted me to do the same, but in all actuality, I was as serious as college debt when I said that.

When we arrived at the park, she ran to the swing, Ahmad chased after her, and I scoped the area, as I always do, and then proceeded to walk their way. After a couple minutes of swinging and introspective conversation, I told Ahmad and Karina that it looked like three people were behind them. Karina jokingly said, "If they come closer I'll just burn them with my lighter," as she pulled out a Steampunk Skull Crossbones Lighter from her sparkling white and brown purse. I guess that topped things off, as the three tall and darkly dressed, intimidating figures busted from behind the bushes and pulled their arms on us. My only hope at the time was that their lives were flashing before their eyes so they couldn't see me flash my way out of the park. Unlike most teens, I was infatuated but I wasn't dumb. All three of us didn't have to die if it came down to it. Before I could realize it, I was at the end of the gate of the park and I was looking at Ahmad, with a gun to his head, and Karina, with a gun to her chest. Surprisingly, I was calm about the whole situation. As one of the three-armed robbers yelled, "Get his little ass, too!" I was jogging blocks away in zigzags while dialing 9-1-1. After being disconnected several times due to horrible phone service, I accelerated for three blocks and ran back into the door of the school. The *Guare Fest* play was still going on and the hallways were clear. I then, legitimately snatched the phone from a "little person," hung up on whomever she was speaking with, and called the police off of her phone, while holding her head down as she tried to reach for it back. I'm not too proud of that. What made matters even worse was that when the phone was answered, they hung up because, according to the dispatcher, the police shouldn't be called "jokingly." Out of all the times to be taken as a joke, that was the worst. I quickly called back, still fighting back a furious and strong, grown "little person." After the dispatcher answered I flooded her line with what seemed like a filibuster and I could sense the regret in her voice for hanging up on me the last time I called. I can vividly remember her saying, "Sorry, sorry, sorry. I'll send a car to Morton as soon as possible."

Minutes later I was in the back of the police car riding back to Maryland Avenue. Nostalgia and an unsettling feeling of failure rested on my shoulders. When we pulled past my old house on Maryland I began to refocus

and think about what I would tell my parents, or even her parents. Before I could conjure up an idea, I looked up and I saw that they were both at Karina's house. When we arrived they told the officer that they had been robbed of all their valuables. Sitting on the porch, Karina was sitting by her family drowning in tears. As much as I wanted to fake cry and act like I felt bad for them, I didn't. I actually thought about how ugly Karina looked as she cried. Rather than feeling sad, I began to become annoyed with myself. Out of all the times I hated myself, I hated myself the most then. Yes, my potential first date ended in a robbery, but at least it wasn't a murder. On the bright side, I had finally made a decision that I had been on the fence for the whole of my first and half of my second trimesters of my sophomore year in high school; I was a track star. I had to have broken some type of record that night. However, when I returned home I wasn't greeted like a champion.

"You out here running in the streets? Go run to them dishes," I can vaguely remember my dad commanding. Instead of being sympathetic or concerned I felt irritation in his voice. My mom, who is usually very comforting at times, looked away almost instantly when I looked toward her hoping for kind words. I returned home just to be alienated again. I spent the night at my house wondering if I should've actually even run. After half washing the dishes, I went straight up to the room I shared with my two remaining sisters. I stayed up the whole night thinking about the alternate possibilities that would have occurred at the park if I would've stayed, or if they would've ran instead of me. More importantly, I wondered if my sisters felt the same emptiness I felt. I wondered if my dad had been living with it his whole life, doing outrageous things to compensate or fill in what he always felt was missing. Was my feeling a consequence of what he felt, or was it genetic? I thought about his word choice when my parents argued. I thought about my sister's cuts. The more I thought about it the more I felt like my problem wasn't even my problem. I no longer felt accountable for my lack of concern. However, I did realize that if I continued down the path I was going I would end up like my father.

Consequently, I realized that I had three options; I could continue to live and hate living, I could die, or I could turn things around and take control of my life. I know my life is no fairytale, but I also know that the farther you pull an arrow back the further it goes when it's released. I chose that night moment to be my moment of release. After being through the worst possible situations in my life it was almost natural for me to shrug them off. The only way I had to go was up. All of these moments cumulatively helped me to realize my life was under my control and if I didn't work toward change it wouldn't happen.

GOODBYE, DEPENDENCY

Allie Moffett

Goodbye, dependency. Goodbye to the girl who relied on her mom to make her food, wash her clothes, and handle confrontation for her. While she is still not so great at making food, she has managed to keep all of her clothes and dignity intact. Goodbye to the girl who doubted her ability to survive on her own. Goodbye to the girl who left her mom with diluted streams of mascara making their way down her face and snot building up in her nose from the uncertainty of what was to come.

Goodbye, dependency. Goodbye to the nervous, shaky, hopeless campus wanderer, unsure of where any of her classes were. Goodbye to the girl who, on her first day of class, walked in with a bloody tissue corked up her nose. Goodbye to the girl who allowed her uncertainty to constrain her and mute her the first few days of her new life as a college student. Fearful uncertainty is still within her, but much less constant. The uncertainty has become a source of excitement, rather than a heavy knot within her chest that yielded her breath from escaping her body.

Goodbye, dependency. Goodbye to the girl who, as hard as she tried, yearned for the comfort of her four-year love. Goodbye to the girl, who assured to all her independence, then went back to her room and thought about how much she missed John. Goodbye to the girl who continuously texted and called him as though she had never left him. Goodbye to the girl who secretly anxiously awaited Thanksgiving break just to see John.

Goodbye, dependency. Goodbye to the girl who stupidly gleamed with happiness the day that she reunited with all of her friends and John. Goodbye to the girl who thought to herself how lucky she was to have an ex she could still be friends with. How could she be so naive, to think that after all of the talking they had been doing, his feelings wouldn't have reemerged? More than that, how could she have let herself play into his feelings?

Goodbye, dependency. Goodbye to the girl who stayed out with John until seven in the morning, allowing herself to imagine life with him back in it. Goodbye to the girl who, for hours, was too weak to tell him that she couldn't go back to him. Goodbye to the girl who gasped for air through her crying fit when he said, "I want you back. I wish you knew how bad my family and I want you back."

Goodbye to the girl who awoke with bloodshot, puffy eyes, a painfully raw nose, and a feeble mind and heart the morning after she let John go.

Goodbye, dependency. Goodbye to all of the pain and uncertainty you led me to. Goodbye to the idea you put in my head: that I couldn't be on my own, without my mom providing and fighting for me, or without some boy who knew just the right things to say to me. I now know that his words were certainly not true.

Goodbye, dependency. From now on I will not allow you to make me feel incapable.

I am capable. I am independent. And I am finally starting to be happy again.

LANGUAGE, INFINITY, AND THE SEARCH FOR MEANING IN
“THE LIBRARY OF BABEL”

Travis Miller

The oldest cave paintings, located at El Castillo, are estimated to be roughly forty thousand years old. Compare this to modern agriculture which, at the earliest, is eleven thousand years old, and one will find that humans felt a need to express themselves through language before the need to feed themselves. This extraordinary, base desire to express oneself through writing is inherently coupled with an equal or exceeding desire to find meaning in language. The minute, yet all-important differences between the physical act of writing and the meaning of language are by no means easy to comprehend. Jorge Luis Borges says it best in his work “The Library of Babel”: “You who read me, are You sure of understanding my language?” (Borges 5). Through “The Library of Babel”, Borges creates a world where there is no human purpose outside of writing and language. On the surface, this makes for a tremendously fascinating story because of aspects such as the contemplation of the near-infinity of the library and, in turn, the near-infinity of unique books. However, as one digs deeper, one will find that by depriving his characters of all other purpose, Borges amplifies their need to find meaning in the “meaningless” writing contained in the books of the library. This amplification provides a basis for an undeniably engaging dialogue about the untapped potential of language. This untapped potential is a truly captivating concept because while we, as humans, cannot totally fathom the notion of an infinite library, we can relate to the characters’ desire to find meaning in writing. While it is true that humans have put together a copious number of credible languages, we have not even scratched the surface of what language has to offer. However, rather than tarry over the volume of their language, it is paramount that humans instead prioritize the substance within.

Before diving into the extensive number of complex implications concerning language in “The Library of Babel”, it is important for one to first garner a certain level of appreciation for the sheer volume of unique books in the library. In his book titled “The Unimaginable Mathematics of Borges’s Library of Babel”, William Goldbloom Bloch sets out to calculate just how extensive this library really is: “we conclude each book consists of $410 * 40 *$

80 = 1,312,000 orthographic symbols; that is, we may consider a book as consisting of 1,312,000 slots to be filled with orthographic symbols ... 25 ways to fill one slot, $25 * 25 = 25^2$ ways to fill two slots ... and so on for 1,312,000 slots. It follows immediately that there are $25^{1,312,000}$ distinct books in the Library. 'That's it' (Bloch 17). "That's it" may seem sarcastic or slightly humorous if it is understood as a representation of the enormous number of books in the library. However, as Bloch communicates in the next paragraph, it is actually meant to refer to the simplicity of the calculation for, what seems like to most, an impossibly complex problem. So there, thanks to Bloch we now have an exact knowledge of how big the library is; or do we? Of course, a number as big as this one is simply impossible to fathom. While this is certainly true, it is possible to obtain a more physical representation that, although is still not simple by any means, will provide a reader with a broader understanding of the immensity of the library. Thankfully, Bloch completes this calculation as well:

Using a ruler shows that an average grain of sand is approximately one millimeter across. If we assume a cubical shape combined with a perfect packing, then we could fit approximately

$$10^3 * 10^3 * 10^3 = 10^9 = 1,000,000,000 = \text{one billion}$$

grain-of-sand books in a cubic meter. Multiplying by the size of the universe, we find that the universe holds only $10^{81} * 10^9 = 10^{90}$ such books. (Bloch 19).

By comparing each book to an individual grain of sand, one can begin to paint a picture of just how unfathomable this library is to humans. By doing a simple calculation based on Bloch's math, one can see that our universe would need to be $10^{1,834,007}$ times larger in order to contain every book (keep in mind that this calculation is done assuming that each book is the size of a single grain of sand). Finally, thanks to an imperfect physical representation of size, one can begin to grasp the impossible situation in which the librarians have been placed. However, the practically infinite space required to contain every book is accompanied by yet another practical infinity; namely, language.

There are a near-infinite number of ways to put together twenty-five characters into a book. This, in turn, means that there must be a near-infinite number of books contained in the library that are entirely full of gibberish. But does it really? If we focus solely on the English language, then the books that are considered gibberish simply mean nothing in English because the creators of English did not give meaning to those combinations of letters. Borges writes:

I cannot combine some characters

dhcmrlchtdj

which the divine Library has not foreseen and which in one of its secret tongues do not contain a terrible meaning. No one can articulate a syllable which is not filled with tenderness and fear, which

is not, in one of these languages, the powerful name of a god. To speak is to fall into tautology. (Borges 5).

It is essential to reiterate the narrator's critical argument: "To speak is to fall into tautology." By agreeing that there are an infinite number of possible languages, one must also agree that, for each possible combination of the twenty-five characters, there are an infinite number of languages in which that combination has an entirely different meaning. For example, in English we have the combination "sad", however there is certainly potential for a language where the combination "sad" has the same meaning as the English combination "happy." However, the majority of first-time readers, myself included, jump straight to the conclusion that the library is mostly full of nonsense.

Even Marcelo Gleiser, the Appleton Professor of Natural Philosophy and a professor of physics and astronomy at Dartmouth College, argues that the library is full of nonsense in his article titled "Borges, The Universe And The Infinite Library": "[There are books] that make sense and completely absurd ones, works that group meaningless sequences of letters compiled into random arrangements with no purpose whatsoever" (Gleiser). To most readers, this may seem like a completely agreeable statement. However, somewhat comically, Gleiser himself contradicts his own statement just a few paragraphs later: "Can we ever fully understand something when we are not able to examine it as a whole? ... the librarians try in vain to decipher the mysteries of their world, unaware that all they can acquire is a partial knowledge of reality" (Gleiser). How can Gleiser claim that he understands the library to be nonsensical when he cannot examine language as a whole? When, as an English speaker, he can only acquire a partial knowledge of language? This, essentially, is the basis for the argument that humans have not scratched the surface of language. Furthermore, this brings into question the creation of the library. Mainly, who could have possibly created such a library, full of an incomprehensible number of books, and for what purpose?

This might seem like an unanswerable question, but to those inhabiting the library, it is one that holds the answers to all their questions. Imagine for a moment that one being created the library in "The Library of Babel." First, it created the infinite hexagonal-staircase structure. Next, it created every single book contained by the library and, finally, placed the humans inside. Why create such a definitively structured space that follows such concrete and unbreakable laws of organization, only to break the logical nature of the space by filling it with nonsense? The narrator of "The Library of Babel" writes of a group of librarians who agree that the language of the books is unknown to humans: "They admit that the inventors of this writing imitated the twenty-five natural symbols, but maintain that this application is accidental and that the books signify nothing in themselves. This dictum, we shall see, is not entirely fallacious" (Borges 2). The narrator indicates that this

way of thinking “is not entirely fallacious” because it is obvious that the librarians’ initial concession is true. That is, every book in the library is made up of the twenty-five natural symbols. However, the narrator seems to disagree with the latter part of their statement. This, of course, is because the narrator believes that the library was the product of some God: “the universe, with its elegant endowment of shelves, of enigmatical volumes, of inexhaustible stairways for the traveler and latrines for the seated librarian, can only be the work of a god” (Borges 2). By believing that the books are the product of a God, the narrator calls into question the original statement of the librarians. Namely, that “the books signify nothing in themselves.” Surely, the narrator believes, a God worth believing in would not torture men with an entire collection of seemingly infinite knowledge when, in actuality, the books have no significance. This too, is not an entirely flawed way of thinking. It seems only logical that a God would not create a trivial and nonsensical library.

The word “logical”, if read by someone who does not have any knowledge of the English language, would of course be judged as nonsense. This situation is no different from the phrase “dhcmrlchtdj” when read by any human. In this sense, then, is not all language nonsensical? Every possible combination of letters is meaningless to someone. This is certainly true of the books contained in the library in relation to humans. Humans cannot comprehend a substantial percentage of the books, and any meaning that they claim to find has been fabricated by their own language, making it purely coincidental. This proves the librarians’ earlier statement about the “accidental” meaning found in the books. Many may find this to be the most bothersome characteristic of “The Library of Babel.” It seems a rather simple deduction that the library, to humans, is full of nonsense. Why then, do many humans insist on searching for meaning in those books when they have their own language to explore? The narrator has found solace by looking toward his understanding of his own language, rather than enslaving himself to a pointless search for meaning in the library. However, it is the belief of Jonathon Basile, creator of the Library of Babel website, that the so-called “nonsense” contained in the library is not actually meaningless after all. A true appreciation of Basile’s argument can only be achieved after reading the argument in its entirety:

There is no such thing as meaninglessness, in other words, and not a single volume or even a single line of text worthy of condemnation in the near-infinite library. According to the theory of language with which we began, a speaker’s intentions can never secure a univocal meaning for his utterance: the possibility for those same signs to appear in new contexts, animated by different intentions or none at all, is as limitless as the library itself. The result is not that language loses all meaning but that it constantly gains more, as even the

unprecedented combinations of its atoms, the letters, wait patiently for the discovery or invention of the language in which they will be the names of new gods. (Basile).

Basile asserts that the hopeless depth of infinite language does not strip human language of its meaning. Rather, the languages we have created, specifically the letters, are waiting to be used in new ways, not yet imagined by humans. Perhaps then, the focus should not rest solely on the works contained in the library, rather the question should be: How does our writing compare to the writing in the books of the library? In relation to “The Library of Babel”, how does the writing held in the preexisting books of the library compare to the writing done by the librarians?

It is apparent by now that human language does not even come close to its full potential. If our language is so miniscule, so insignificant, why do we write? The narrator has this to say about his own writing: “The methodical task of writing distracts me from the present state of men. The certitude that everything has been written negates us or turns us into phantoms. I know of districts in which the young men prostrate themselves before books and kiss their pages in a barbarous manner, but they do not know how to decipher a single letter” (Borges 5). In an indirect way, these few lines perfectly encapsulate the reason we write. The narrator explicitly states that, for him, writing is a way of distracting himself from the state of men. For him, writing is an escape from reality, no matter how temporary. While it is true that we cannot relate to the universe the narrator finds himself a part of, everyone can relate to needing an escape from reality. Whether this escape comes as a result of sports, video games, or hanging out with friends, everyone needs an escape at some point. For many, this escape comes from writing and, for humans, that is all the reason we need.

Up to a point, the volume of our language is of little significance. It is what we gain from the essence of our language that makes all the difference. At the end of “The Library of Babel” the task of writing comforts the narrator, whereas he observes others constantly losing sanity over the search for meaning in the library. The narrator even notes: “I believe I have mentioned suicides, more and more frequent with the years” (Borges 5). Trying to find meaning in the meaningless is a plague that literally kills many of the librarians in the story. Perhaps if they had looked toward their own understanding, rather than searching for more, they could have found the meaning they so desired. “The Library of Babel” begins with the epigraph: “By this art you may contemplate the variations of the 23 letters...” (Borges 1). A fitting beginning to the story, this epigraph propels the reader into an expansive exploration of the marvel that is language.

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THE IMPACT OF A SINGLE SOUL

Melanie Plotke

Only the outliers succeed. Having said that, define success. Do “outliers” succeed in their education and graduate college with a well-paying job? It seems as though that is not above average. In fact, only the innovators use their education to impact others instead of themselves. These are the individuals who change the world. There is no set definition of changing the world, as it is impossible for every person in every continent to be affected by a single individual. But in order to change the world, an individual must have made changes to multiple communities across the world. One individual may have an idea that can spark a movement or drastic evolution in a company. By acting out this idea, they are ensuring more people and communities are impacted. One person does not have to travel to every continent and do it alone, but by them having the work ethic to carry out a passion of theirs will change the world. By building an empire of support, an individual can wisely use the help provided to change the world. It takes an extraordinary person to focus on making a positive impact for others. Full of selflessness and dedication, exceptional individuals can take on a challenge and positively change the world.

Born in 1949, Nancy M. Barry was the eldest of five siblings. She had three uncles, each with their own consulting company. Even as a young woman, her peers described Nancy as quiet and humble. Getting accepted into Stanford University, she took on a tough major of economics. She graduated in 1971 with a bachelor’s degree in hand. After graduation, she took a freighter to Peru finding a job with a government agency that was constructing middle-class housing. She was not satisfied with the work she was doing. Barry could not stand but to observe the poor people who clearly were in more need. "With all the self-confidence of a 22-year-old," she recalls, "I persuaded the agency to use its money to provide the slums with water, sanitation systems, and electricity and to create enterprises that would help these people build income and assets," (HBS 2005). Knowing the company she worked for could make a difference, Barry could not just be a bystander.

However, the idea that she needed to ask for assistance to do this was frustrating for an independent woman. She set her sights on being the boss, or being the one that made an impact. Barry's next target was gaining more knowledge about the business aspect of helping others. Harvard was the ideal place for her to do this. Remembering her stay in Peru, she said, "I saw many Peruvians who could do my job, and I wanted the kind of graduate education that would make it possible for me to have a bigger impact," (HBS 2005). Her humbling words show her true colors. Nancy would not let these poor people, and others around the world go unnoticed when she had the capability to somehow make an impact. She concluded her education in 1975, earning an MBA from Harvard Business School. Shortly after, she had the honor to join the World Bank's Young Professionals Program. She dedicated fifteen years in various positions at the World Bank, until she was offered a lower-paying position at the Women's World Bank. She made the transition; going from a global company to a small New York office was a challenge Nancy Barry was ready for. At the time, the Women's World Bank had a total of six staff members, including her. Having the most experience, Nancy managed the office. She found an interest in microfinance services, and her passion followed.

Microfinance is a service that includes, but is not excluded to, the extension of very small loans to people that do not have access to capital. The main goal of this service is to provide unstable people a financial ground to start up a business or service that will keep income flowing in. It is commonly known as a very small amount that plants the seed to success. The hardest part for specifically women in poverty is to start up a business or service. Having no savings, they have no extra money to put towards building their own profitable business. Women's World banking does take a large focus on helping women in particular because there are far less opportunities compared to men. As shown in figure 1, about 67% of illiterate people in the world are women. This is due to the fact of men having the priority to attend school. Without an education, more women need outside help achieving financial independency. Otherwise, there would be no hope. Women are also taking care of children at home, so by helping them in turn helps their children. This is the reasoning behind Nancy Barry switching companies to focus on women. She knew the values of the organization were similar to her morals and was a great basis for her to begin her journey. "It was a remarkably nimble organization," she explains, "with revolutionary principles and a transformational agenda that focused on supporting local organizations and leaders and bringing a business approach to effecting economic and social change," (HBS, 2005).

Nancy Barry knew she could not execute her vision without the help of others. After being appointed President of Women's World Banking in 1990, Barry increased her staff volume from six to thirty. Her budget was set

at only \$2 million, and she felt the pressure. She had to juggle paying staff, traveling expenses, extending loans and credit, and opening institutions overseas. Using her best judgment, she put a team together of analysts, practitioners, economists and managers from around the world. "To create real networks, you have to believe that the center of an operation does not have a monopoly on truth, and you need to trust the people, trust the process," Barry says. She believed in the people she appointed and those remarkable people set very high standards for themselves and for the company.

Using her network, she was able to grow her customer database to more than forty countries across Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East. Out of all the countries, the women of Egypt are made quick progress. From the data sheet, it is surprising that the average loan extended is around \$100 per woman. Nancy's hopes are for these women to develop into strong entrepreneurs and contributors to their community. "The impact of these loans is extraordinary," said Barry. "Poor women have shown that they are the world's best customers, repaying their loans and using their increased income to feed, clothe, and educate their children and strengthen their communities," (Lee 2011). Expanding rapidly, the capital assets of her evolving company grew from six million to thirty million. With the increase in capital, comes development. Barry made the move to start the expansion of financial institutions in these poor countries, so that women can get aid right at home. This development grew to be 54 institutions across the globe, as laid out in the map provided.

Without Nancy Barry, the Women's World Bank would not have made leaps and bounds as they have up until this day. Nancy fostered the dispersion over \$7 billion in loans and is responsible for the current status of \$3.5 billion in savings, (WWB Annual Report, 2005). In the graph provided, it shows that only 10.3 million poor women were reached with microloans prior to 1999 versus 69 million in just the year of 2005. Ultimately, Nancy Barry alone was the root of reaching 27 of the 69 million reached in 2005. As of today, the Women's World Banking is the world's most massive network of microfinance institutions.

The women who receive aid use their credit or loan for many different things. Some may not be able to get their business rolling, so they use it for inventory or staffing. Some use it to invest in themselves and pay school fees to get a better education. No matter how they use it, Nancy has confidence that somehow they will make their lives better and improve their community as well. For example, the micro financing sector in India generalized what people were doing with the capital. Shown in the graph, almost half of the population that receives a loan uses it to start a small business. This is a smart decision since the client is able to repay the loan in a timely matter, and will continue to make profit far past the loan's values.

One success story of many comes from the country of Malawi, located in southeast Africa. A young woman named Littania went to school until she was 18 years old and then was on her own. At 33 years old, she had the responsibility of three children and a set of elderly parents to care for. She made a smart decision, getting involved with the massive fish business in her town. Bordering the Indian Ocean, this job in Malawi will never die down. However, working for someone else was not making enough money to support her and five others. Littania sought help from one of WWB's financial institutions in order to get her feet off the ground. Being given a loan of \$225, Littania thought hard about how to grow it. She started off by buying larger quantities of fish from her supplier, which grew her profits immensely. She also used the money to cultivate land, start livestock production, and pay for school fees for all three of her children. In an interview, she reported that she feels more independent than ever. She fully is able to support her entire family as she continues to make bigger dreams. Littania says, "I would like to build a butcher shop, build houses to rent and also become a commercial farmer," (2011). She, and millions of other women are so thankful for these services. Their lives, and the ones around them, have been completely changed forever; all because of one individual.

Nancy's dedication persevered as she transformed a small company into a global multi-million dollar organization. Her work ethic is commendable, as not everyone would have the patience to try to get something to grow for years. She uses her expertise in business and economics to intuitively make decisions and expand The Women's World Bank. Of course, outside of a businesswoman, Nancy had very admirable values as she chose her profession based off of her morals. Her priority throughout her career was the women, and tried her best to alleviate the weight of poverty for them around the world. She did just that, changing the world for the better. Nancy M. Barry is the root from which different communities around the world were able to branch off of and continue to blossom to this day.

"If big is the only way to achieve your mission, thinking big, no matter how small you start, is the only way to reach it." -*Nancy M. Barry*

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GENRES OF *PINOCCHIO*: FOLKTALE AND FAIRYTALE

Allie Pence

The story of *Pinocchio*, written by Carlo Collodi, is filled with situations that in comparison to what is possible in the real world would seem to be magic. The fact that magical concepts are used in Collodi's story would make people believe that *Pinocchio* is a fairytale. Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines fairytale as, "A story (for children) involving fantastic forces and beings (as fairies, wizards, and goblins). A story in which improbable events lead to a happy ending" (Merriam). Despite the story containing some enchanted qualities; the novel, *Pinocchio*, has more characteristics of a folktale that teaches a morale lesson to its audience. A folktale is defined as, "a story made up and handed down by the common people" (Merriam). His story contains qualities of both genres. He does this in order to better relate his messages to a young audience. Disney's rendition of the tale of *Pinocchio* also attempts to reach this younger audience. He accomplishes this task by taking out some of the folktale ideals that Collodi utilizes, and instead uses fairylike characteristics to better reach his viewers. Walt Disney's film *Pinocchio* has been adapted from Carlo Collodi's original work and is within the fairytale genre; whereas Collodi's novel, *Pinocchio*, is considered to be a folktale. Even though both versions tell similar stories; the differences in genres were made to better reach a children audience, but with differing cultures and times.

Disney's interpretation of Collodi's novel *Pinocchio* differs greatly in the content included as well as the approach taken to communicate lessons. Both fairytales and folktales share the characteristic of being instructive to their audience. However, the method that Disney uses to depict lessons is accomplished using magical qualities. This is what creates the idea that the film is considered a fairytale. For example, Disney puts emphasis on the magical characteristics of the Blue Fairy by making her appear from the stars then perform extraordinary tasks that are not possible in the real world. The fairy is able to make a puppet talk, and later she turns him into a real boy (Pinocchio). This is obviously not possible in the real world, but Disney portrays the action to be effortless because it is magical. The book also contains a similar character: the fairy with blue hair. She ends up acting more as a mother or sister figure to Pinocchio and is used to progress the story and teach Pinocchio lessons as the story develops (Collodi). Disney plays with this idea and the fairy acts in the film as a character without strong context within the story. Because of this, the fairy primarily appears within the film only to perform magical acts.

Collodi's version of *Pinocchio* contains some magical qualities but generally follows the genre of a folktale. Pinocchio's story draws from traditional Italian stories and other adventurous tales, a common characteristic amongst folktales. "It relies heavily on the Tuscan novella or short-story tradition to which Boccaccio's *Decameron* belongs, and also on classical sources, such as Homer and Dante...the *Odyssey*, the *Aeneid*, and the *Divine Comedy* to the structure and style of *Pinocchio*" (West 167). Folktales typically come from oral traditions and stories that can be passed down. Oral traditions of folk tales can also be seen, even on the first page, with the opening dialogue. The narrator begins by saying, "Once upon a time, there was.... 'A king!' my little readers will say at once. No, children, you're wrong. Once upon a time, there was a piece of wood" (Collodi 3). The author does this to set up the mood of telling a story for the children as if it were spoken to them, just as a storyteller would typically start. The genre of a folktale is typically known for being for the common people. The idea of oral traditions existed because common people wanted to enjoy stories, but not everyone was always literate. Collodi ties in this idea by inferring that the kids will say "A King", and then he surprises them by saying "a piece of wood". This shows that he wants to appeal to not just the high class, but to entice all (Marrs). Collodi pulls in legends, uses oral traditions, and attempts to reach every young child by following the characteristics of a folktale.

In comparison to Disney's film and approach with magical concepts; the way that Collodi teaches moral lessons is vital in what constitutes the story as a folk tale. Both the film and the book aim to teach moral lessons to the audience, but the book approaches the morale lessons by putting more emphasis on what to take away from a situation. Folk tales often give caution to readers about possible outcomes from various actions and behaviors.

Disney's film addresses these lessons. This is seen when Pinocchio sets off to go to school, but then is distracted and changes paths after meeting the fox, Honest John and his cat friend Gideon (Pinocchio). In the film, the lesson that the young puppet should receive an education is important for the audience. The fact that he gets pulled away then into trouble is less obvious a lesson for the audience to grasp. But in Collodi's novel, the importance of receiving an education is addressed in various situations. Then the punishments for not going to school are more directly associated with lack of going. Pinocchio's friend peer pressure him to skip school by saying, "Who cares about school? We can go to school tomorrow. One day more or less of school- we'll still be the same old jackasses." Pinocchio then struggles with

this by saying his mother would not approve and that his teacher would be upset. But Pinocchio gives in by saying, “Then let’s go! And the last one there’s a rotten egg!” (Collodi 94-95). The cautions that Collodi sets up for his readers are more obvious in his novel than in the film. This idea of cautious lessons is one that folklores and fairytales have in common, but still can be different.

The genres that the two versions of *Pinocchio* take on play a vital role in reaching their audiences. Both Disney and Collodi aim for a children’s audience, but they differ in the fact that the children come from different cultures and time differences. *Pinocchio* was born in 1881-1883 in Italy. Collodi originally wrote only the first 15 chapters in a children’s magazine, *Corriere dei piccolo* (Jeanet). He then wrote the rest of the chapters in response to the high demand from his readers. Collodi uses the genre of folktale and exaggerations of moral lessons to appeal to the Italian audience at the time and draw in the public to enjoy his stories. Collodi’s use of humor in his novel is better catered towards the Italian culture at the time. An example is when Pinocchio walks through the woods and comes across the serpent in the middle of the rode. This is supposed to be humorous because of the interaction Pinocchio has with the serpent and simply because the people expect a troll and it is humorous. This goes over most American’s heads as a humorous aspect (Collodi 70-72). Meanwhile, to reach high popularity in America with his film version of *Pinocchio*, Disney turns the more folktale version of the story into a magical rendition of the classic version. Disney knows that the fairytale concept is one that his audience enjoys and expects; especially after the success of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. By taking more magical elements and eliminating the Italian folklore from the story, the American audience in the 1940s can better relate and enjoy the film. It is also important to understand world history for the release of the film. During this time, World War II was in progress and Italy was a part of the Axis powers. There are less Italian aspects within the film and as some of the more realistic ideals that are included in Collodi’s version fit to Italian culture were eliminated, it made Disney’s story seem more magical because the realistic actions were replaced with magical ideas. Disney most likely left out some of the Italian ideals from the plot and changes the genre to fairytale for this reason. Both Collodi and Disney catered the genre of the story to better fit the young audiences of their cultures at the time.

The differing genres of fairytale and folktale play a vital role in the telling of *Pinocchio*. Disney uses the genre of fairytale in his telling of the story by performing magical actions that are only possible in fairytales, such as bringing Pinocchio to life. The novel performs with some magical acts, but in actuality it follows more of a folktale genre. Folktales are based off legends of oral traditions. Collodi’s book establishes itself from the beginning to be for the common people and a spoken dialogue based upon tales of other legends.

In addition, both the film and the novel give caution to readers through problems that Pinocchio faces in the story. Collodi's novel more closely follows a folktale's path of teaching lessons because it focuses on the problem and how the character learns from these lessons. Both Collodi and Disney are clever in arranging the story with different genres because it better fits the young audiences they are trying to reach based upon the time and cultures they were released in. Disney includes more magic and eliminates Italian aspects of the film to better reach an American audience during World War II. Collodi uses a folktale genre to appeal to the common people and include humor that is better fit for a young Italian audience in 1881. Both Collodi and Disney are smart by customizing the genre of the story of *Pinocchio* to better fit their target audience in order to gain popularity within their cultures in their periods of time.

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POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY AND THE CONCEPT OF THE SCANDINAVIAN UNITARY REPUBLIC

David M. Sexton

The modern state is the culmination of human cooperation and organization. Politics govern interactions, the use of technology, all social institutions and combined efforts; it is the foundation of modern society, leaving virtually no aspect of life unaffected. The evolution has seen government serve a more active role in everyday life and the role of government rapidly expanded, for better or worse. The objective of western government, especially in Europe, has shifted in the last century from projecting power on an international scale to international cooperation and the provision of services to citizens that would've been unheard of 70 years ago. Government and politics have a profound effect on citizens' quality of life in a state, and it should be the primary objective of a government to maintain a high quality of life, and ensure the prosperity of its citizens. The institutional structure of the Scandinavian Unitary Republic is designed to fulfill this objective.

Rebalancing and dispersing power, capitalizing on the successes of modern representative democracies, and concentrating the institution of government in a unitary system are the central themes that distinguish this state from any standing republic. Furthermore, several themes of Plato's and Aristotle's more foundation level theories of a government's role in society can be identified as more complex institutions, expanded through millennia of human existence, crucial to the stability and success of modern democratic governments. It should be acknowledged that the evolution of the Scandinavian Unitary Republic would be something to likely occur after Gunnar Wetterberg's proposed Nordic Federation, being a more loosely associated economic and defense cooperative that has more respect for the original nations within the proposed federation (*The United Nordic Federation*). Evolution is a major part of this proposed unitary state. With this example and Wetterberg's proposal, there exists an assertion that governments may not have to decay until they fall and are replaced by a more (or less) perfect alternative, but could evolve out of themselves into a greater form (Aristotle 154-161).

National Statistics and Resources

The Scandinavian Unitary Republic (SUR) is composed of all the nations of the Nordic Region, being Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Finland, and excluding Iceland. Iceland's physical isolation made it an unlikely candidate for a unitary state based in Scandinavia. However, the inclusion of such areas as Greenland and the Faroe Islands are not necessarily concerned with their physical distance, but their status as territories of Denmark. The Scandinavian Unitary Republic boasts a moderate population of 26,280,471 citizens, compared to its size of 3,384,307 km² including Greenland (OSF; Statistics Denmark; Statistics Norway; Statistics Sweden; *The United Nordic Federation*). Additionally, the SUR boasts an excellent national gross domestic product of \$1,341,320,000,000 translating to a per-capita GDP of \$51,038.66. The Republic's economy will also remain sustainable far into the future because of the vast crude oil resources in Norway and its territories, the manufacturing industry of most Scandinavian countries, and the trade dominance in the North and Baltic Seas (OSF; Statistics Denmark; Statistics Norway; Statistics Sweden; *The United Nordic Federation*).

Plato, in establishing his Kallipolis dwells on the size of his state, and wanted to ensure sustainability and control of the population. While Plato has created a government for a city and small society, the principle persists when discussing a larger republic (Plato 61). The SUR occupies a large amount of land for the size of its population, which is a positive position to be in considering there is room for growth. However, populations in western European countries have been stabilizing in the last half a century because of prolonged prosperity and economic stability (*The United Nordic Federation*). With the SUR's abundant natural resources and the economic stability of the original nations within the Republic, a major population shift is unlikely so long as those conditions persist under the unitary government. So, Plato's ideal city-state can be expanded to fit a larger nation so long as stability is established and persists.

Government Structure

The Scandinavian Unitary Republic will operate under a hybrid, representative-republican democracy that concentrates governing power in the central government, but establishes more checks and balances. Firstly, the SUR will be a unitary state, with local municipal and regional governments being subservient to the Central Government. Local governments shall only establish ordinances and proclamations specific to their community. The Central Government shall legislate nationally, doing the job of state and federal entities in a federation. To begin explaining this system, Fig. 1 illustrates the flow of legislation through the branches of government. A representative democracy can be described as the modern inception of Aristotle's polity (Aristotle 159-161). Governments must be bound by rules

and regulations in the form of a constitution and those rules preserved by checks and balances between individuals and branches of government. So while the power of governing is concentrated in the Central Government, there are many checks and balances on that power that must be navigated to actually legislate.

Legislative Branch

The function of a government is to legislate and execute; so to specifically define the Scandinavian Unitary Republic's government, the legislature must be established. The Legislative Branch of government is a bicameral legislature with a lower and upper house. The lower house shall be the Cabinet Assembly whose leaders are to be appointed by the chief executive (the Chairman of the Executive Council), and confirmed by the higher house of legislation (the Legislative Assembly). The Cabinet Assembly is composed of several individual councils corresponding to the Ministries of the Chairman's Executive Cabinet. Cabinet Ministers are appointed by the Chairman with the advice and consent of the other members of the Executive Council, then confirmed by the Legislative Assembly. The Cabinet ministers then make appointments for their undersecretaries to be confirmed by the Legislative Assembly in a simple majority. Undersecretaries serve on their corresponding Cabinet Councils. There are not a set number of undersecretaries (and therefore council members) for any Ministry and Cabinet Council, except for the Defense Forces Council. Cabinet Ministers' appointments usually reflect the number of individual departments within their ministry. Therefore, sometimes undersecretary positions are added or dropped administration to administration. The Council of Justice should not be comprised of a single cabinet ministry. Rather, the Council of Justice should consist of the Minister of Justice and his/her undersecretaries, the Advocate General of the Courts, the Attorney General, and the Solicitor General. The Cabinet Assembly is comprised of all the individuals Cabinet Councils. The assembly is led by a Parliamentarian appointed by the Chairman of the Executive Council with the advice and consent of the other members of the Executive Council. The Parliamentarian maintains a staff which sees to all full Cabinet Assembly matters. Staff includes sergeant-at-arms, assembly secretary, and other necessary logistical positions. The full Cabinet Assembly sees legislation proposed and votes on which individual Cabinet Council or conference (multiple Cabinet Councils) will review and vote on the legislation to be passed and sent to the Legislative Assembly. Also the full Cabinet Assembly polices the ethics of its members. Ethical violations by any member of the assembly will be discussed in full assembly. The highest disciplinary action the assembly may take is to recommend a member's suspension to the Executive Council. In extenuating circumstances assembly members in question may be placed on emergency suspension pending a

decision by the Executive Council. The full Cabinet Assembly shall be responsible for formulating a Central Budget with the advice and consent of the Chairman of the Executive Council. The Cabinet Assembly must pass the budget for approval by the Legislative Assembly, and then by the Executive Council. Assembly members' terms last for the four-year term of the administration which appointed them unless they are otherwise removed.

The concept of the Cabinet Assembly is sort of a combination of the sub-committees in the American congress, and the U.S. Senate before the passage of the 17th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Legislation originates in a branch that was appointed by an elected executive and confirmed by an elected legislature; so this lower house is intended to be an assembly of experts who filter legislation before it is discussed and debated by a directly elected assembly.

The Legislative Assembly is directly elected by the people in a system of proportional representation. There will be 250 seats in the Legislative Assembly that are to be distributed among the five election districts of Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark, and the Greenland/Faroe District in a mix of population proportionality and equal distribution. The National Election Commission should meet every 10 years after a census is conducted to determine if a change is needed in the distribution of seats. Currently the distribution should be 96 seats for Sweden, 42 seats each for Denmark and for Norway, 50 seats for Finland, and 20 seats for the Greenland and Faroe Islands District. The Legislative Assembly will be elected in a system of proportional representation where parties are given seats based on the percentage of the vote they receive with an 8% electorate threshold in each election district; so if there are remaining seats and no party has obtained 8% of the electorate of a province, the seat will be awarded to the party with the plurality of the remaining electorate's votes. The Legislative Assembly will be led by an Assembly Speaker chosen from the elected members of the assembly by the assembly, and shall determine its own rules for proceedings and police its own members. The Legislative Assembly approves or rejects legislation, sent to it by the Cabinet Assembly, based on a simple majority. While legislation may not originate in the Legislative Assembly, members of the Legislative Assembly may propose legislation to the Cabinet Assembly. The Legislative Assembly may override a veto by the Executive Council with a 2/3 majority vote. Members of the Legislative Assembly will have six-year terms. Every two years 32 Swedish seats, 14 Danish and Norwegian seats, 6 or 8 seats for Greenland and the Faroe Islands, and 16 or 18 Finnish seats will be up for reelection.

Executive Branch

The executive branch of government is where the previously discussed increased dispersion of powers occurs. The Executive Council

holds the legislative powers of the executive branch, and maintains checks on the military powers held by the Chairman of the Executive Council. The Executive Council is headed by a Chairman of the Executive Council, who serves as the official head of state, and Commander in Chief of the Defense Forces. The focus of the Chairman should be on military and diplomatic matters, however he or she must also moderate the proceedings of the Executive Council and ensure the efficiency of the executive branch. The Chairman also sets precedent for domestic policy by appointing Cabinet Ministers which lead and create the additional structure for the Cabinet Assembly. The Chairman's appointments must be made with the advice and consent of the other members of the Executive Council, then confirmed by the Legislative Assembly in a simple majority. Similarly, the Chairman will make appointments of judges for the Central Courts and for Justices of the Supreme Court to be approved and confirmed in the same fashion. This power and process of appointment extends to upper level military positions with the advice and consent of the sitting members of the Defense Forces Council and confirmation by the Legislative Assembly. The Chairman shall retain the powers of Commander in Chief of the National Defense Force, and maintains operational authority for the defense of the nation. However, the Chairman's power for long term campaign type operations are subject to the approval of the full Executive Council. The Chairman is elected by the whole body of citizens of the Republic in a majoritarian system where the winner has won the plurality of votes among the candidates for the office. The Chairman shall hold a vote in Council on legislative, military, and bureaucratic matters, however, the Chairman shall not hold a vote on matters of the Executive Council's operation and procedure. The Chairman does not hold the power of veto over the Executive Council on matters of the passage of legislation but does hold the power of veto on military and bureaucratic matters.

There are five sitting members forming the Executive Council; each member represents one election district, and is elected by that constituency. The offices of Council members are elected in a majoritarian system where the victor has won a plurality of the votes among the candidates for office in his/her constituency. One sitting member of the Executive Council is designated Head Councilmember, and serves as secondary chair to the Chairman. The position of Head Councilmember is the next in line for the executive, and shall obtain the powers of the Chairman in the event he/she should be impeached, leave office, or otherwise be unable to hold office. The Executive Council must sign legislation into law and holds the power of veto over the legislative branch, which may be overridden by a 2/3 majority vote of the Legislative Assembly. The Executive Council should be advised of the ministerial appointments to be made by the Chairman, and should give their consent to his/her appointments if they are moved to do so. The Executive

Council also holds the power to issue executive orders to Cabinet Ministries, government agencies, and government corporations pertaining to issues of bureaucratic administration and the enforcement of laws. Executive orders should be issued with a majority vote of the Executive Council and signed into effect by the Chairman, who may veto an executive order, but his/her veto may be overridden by a 4/5 vote of the Executive Council. The Executive Council shall set its own rules for procedure and police its own members. Suspension of any member of the Executive Council should be approved unanimously by all other members of the Executive Council and approved by the Chairman as a temporary disciplinary measure. If impeachment of any member of the Executive Council should be necessary, the Executive Council must vote unanimously, excluding the member in question, to send the Councilmember to an impeachment trial lead by the Legislative Assembly. The Legislative Assembly must vote in a 2/3 majority to impeach a member of the Executive Council. Should the impeachment of the Chairman of the Executive Council be necessary, the same procedures apply, however the Head Councilmember should also be excluded from voting due to a conflict of interest.

Judicial Branch

The judiciary of a democratic state should be an independent entity to ensure the fair practice of justice and the absence of politics from decisions affecting the rights of citizens and the state of the Republic's Constitution. The Judicial Branch shall be comprised of the Legal Courts of the Republic, highest Court being the Supreme Court; who's Justices are appointed as prescribed in the powers of the Chairman of the Executive Council. The Supreme Court has the power to choose which cases it hears and which it does not and also has the power to call a case up from a lower court. The Legislative Assembly has the power to determine the number of seats on the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court shall have the power to review the constitutionality of laws in relation to the cases it hears. The Justices of the Supreme Court shall also have the power, every four years corresponding to the terms of the Executive Council, to appoint an Advocate General of the Courts who shall advise the legislative and executive branches as to the state and needs of the Judicial System. Furthermore, the Advocate General of the Courts shall serve in the Chairman's Cabinet, and shall create his/her own staff of advisers. Below the Supreme Court there are a network of Central Courts which see cases of felony violations of Central Law, cases of equity violations on the part of the Central Government, and cases involving maritime zones. Central Courts exist in Judicial Districts separate from the established Administrative Regions (local government areas). Central Appellate Courts are established within the District Courts to hear appeals and determine if a mistrial has occurred. District Courts are established in

every Administrative District, municipal and rural, and hear cases of misdemeanor and infractionary violations of Central Law, as well as violations of District ordinance. Judges of District courts are appointed by either municipal governments or regional commissions. District Appellate Courts exist within the District Court system which should be restricted to determining if a mistrial had occurred in the previous instance of a case. Civil Courts exist in each Administrative Region as well, and shall hear cases of civil disputes where no law or ordinance has been violated, and Judges for civil courts are appointed in the same manner as those of the District Courts.

Election Law and Citizenship

The means of elections is a crucial part of the efficiency of the Central Government. A separate, popularly elected National Elections Commission is designed to enforce strict election laws to encourage citizen participation in government, and a higher level of debate in politics. Each member of the National Elections Commission serves 10-year terms that are offset by five years from each national census. The members of the National Elections Commission must be nonpartisan, and may not have had any prior affiliation with a political party. Candidates are approved by the vacating Elections Commission and then confirmed by the Legislative Assembly. The National Elections Commission sets election rules for all levels of government and is responsible for enforcing a high standard of politics and discussion in the Republic. Campaigning for any office shall not occur longer than three months, and no candidate may accept campaign contributions or fund their own campaigns. Campaigns shall be funded equally by the Central Government, and each candidate will be given the opportunity to have their platform heard multiple times via the NBO, local television, and radio. Only citizens may vote in elections, whether natural born or naturalized. The government maintains an applicative immigration policy, with separate rules for accepting asylum seekers and refugees and maintains a policy of assisting endangered and impoverished peoples around the world.

Cabinet Ministries and Government Agencies

The bureaucracy of government is comprised of Ministries of the Chairman's executive cabinet which enforce the laws of their corresponding policy areas. Fig. 2 shows the extent of Cabinet Ministries and Government agencies at the level of executive appointment and legislative confirmation.

Cabinet Ministries and Government Agencies

Cabinet Ministries

- Ministry of Defense
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Ministry of National Safety
- Ministry of Justice
 - Office of the Attorney General
 - Office of the Solicitor General
- Ministry of Health
 - Office of the Surgeon General
- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Public Assistance
- Ministry of Infrastructure and Urban Development
- Ministry of Commerce and Trade
- Ministry of Natural Resources
- Ministry of Agriculture
- Ministry of Energy
- Ministry of Labor
- Ministry of the Treasury

Government Agencies

- Nordic Broadcasting Organization (NBO)
- Census Bureau
- National Elections Commission
- Central Maintenance Service
- Registrar General's Office
- National Legislative Library
- National Banking Service
- Central Postal Service
- Central Monetary Policy Bureau
- Office of the Comptroller General
- Executive Budget Advisor

Several of the Cabinet Ministries differ or expand heavily from Aristotle's proposed magistrates, however those base level bureaus have expanded into a complex bureaucracy that manages an entire nation of millions. While such ministries as Labor, Energy, and Public Assistance are difficult to find matches for; the Treasury, Ministry of Justice, and Ministry of Defense have almost exact matches to Aristotle's ideal bureaucracy (Aristotle 116). Also, the bureaucracy of the Scandinavian Unitary Republic contains individual positions for records and accountability (the Comptroller General and Registrar General), unlike in the United States where the duties of those offices are mostly dispersed among multiple agencies (Aristotle 114).

State Policies

From an American constitutional perspective, the idea of including specific policies in the description of an ideal state is peculiar. Often, policies such as healthcare, military service, taxes, and even public services would be viewed as fluid from administration to administration, and subject to change over time. However, this is the point in the structuring of the Scandinavian Unitary Republic where issues are less in the form of constitutional establishment, and more in the preferred policy values held in government.

The government has the authority to regulate the commerce of the Republic, both locally and internationally, but shall not undermine the nature and function of a free market economy. Furthermore, the government shall maintain a policy of free trade, unless in a time of crisis. Wage floors and ceilings should be set to encourage a more equitable distribution of wealth,

and industries should be regulated to prevent monopolization and encourage competition. Plato establishes the regulation of society in the division of classes under his “noble lie.” As Plato regulates class to push the classes apart, the function of the Central Government’s economic regulations is to draw the classes closer together, strengthening the middle class and creating a fair, healthy, regulated capitalist system (Plato 116).

Both levels of government may levy taxes. The Central Government levies a progressive income tax on all citizens, and a corporate tax on all businesses that shall be progressive based on brackets of profit. The Central Government shall levy a further capital gains tax on citizens and businesses for the exchange of stocks, bonds, precious metals, and property; as well as a national sales tax. In order to maintain the Nordic Broadcasting Organization (NBO), the purchase of a TV License will also be required. Administrative Districts and Regions levy a property tax based on the value of owned property, to be assessed by the District Appraiser’s Office; and may levy further taxes on personal vehicles, and additional services taxes based on the requirements of local municipal and regional governments. The Central Government’s progressive taxes should not receive reductions except for those citizens living below or in close proximity to the poverty line; but should establish tax deductions for citizens and businesses who make charitable donations or who volunteer their time. Municipal and Regional governments should establish tax deductions to encourage sound environmental and health habits such as fuel efficient vehicle ownership or a sugar tax, or if a homeowner/business has invested in a supplemental renewable energy source.

Plato is very concentrated on the concept of common meals, that they strengthen bonds among the guardians and serve to bolster a community (Plato 119). However, the common meals serve a function as a public service that should be recognized. Modern governments are often compelled to establish public health and pension services, and the same is true for the SUR. The Central Government established a Central Healthcare Service to provide for all citizens’ preventative and emergency medical services, long-term treatment, family healthcare and planning, dental care, pharmaceutical services, hospice care, assisted living, and necessary cosmetic care. Also a Pension Program is established for all citizens who have reached the age of retirement or who are otherwise unable to work for physical or mental reasons. Finally for the government’s public services, a Central Welfare Service provides financial assistance to families or individuals living below or in close proximity to the poverty line before tax deductions are factored in to personal or household income.

Education is an issue that is very prevalent in the minds of Plato and Aristotle. Both philosophers are interested in setting strict curriculums for students to follow, and make education a major issue of the state (Aristotle

119; Plato 99). Public education is a staple of virtually all industrialized nations, and the state naturally has an interest in ensuring students are being taught properly. However, the Scandinavian Unitary Republic has interest more invested in letting teachers teach rather than focus on standards. The Central Government establishes base level standards for primary, secondary, and post-secondary institutions that receive state funding. However, the specifics of curriculum and how individual community schools and universities exceed the national standards should be established by the local administration of the aforementioned organizations. The objective of the Central Government in education should be to provide the means for schools to educate students. It should create an environment that encourages educational creativity and teaches students responsibility, curiosity, and a love for knowledge. To quote Plato, "...for the object of education is to teach us to love what is beautiful" (Plato 100).

Modern democratic governments usually maintain (or claim to maintain) a policy of separating church and state, which is in direct contrast to Plato's Kallipolis. Plato's noble lie is the establishment of a religion in its self, and therefore establishes a state partially as a theocracy (Plato 116). The Scandinavian Unitary Republic will follow the trend of separating church and state, because a democratic government must be representative of all citizens, not just those of a certain religion. No level of government shall pass a law, enact an ordinance, issue an edict or order that respects an establishment of religion or recognize the state as affiliated with a religion. Nor shall the government prevent the free exercise of religion provided that exercise does not endanger one's self, one's fellow citizens, or the society as a whole.

Military institutions have evolved greatly since Plato and Aristotle's time. Modern governments engage in warfare only when necessary, preferring to use diplomacy and economics to 'conquer and pillage.' The Central Government maintains a National Defense Force consisting of five branches, the Land Defense Force, Maritime Defense Force, Air Defense Force, Home Guard, and Coast Guard. Military engagements shall be solely for the defense of the Republic, and the Defense Forces should not be used for conquest or oppression of other sovereign nations. Additionally, all able bodied citizens who are not attending post-secondary education shall be compelled to devote two years of service, including training, to one of the five branches of service, or the Humanitarian Service Corps under the National Service Act after they have reached adulthood. They shall be compelled to remain as a reservist for 8 years after the initial service requirement has been fulfilled; however, they may choose to attend post-secondary education after the two years of service. The National Service act and the National Defense Force will not discriminate between male and female, viewing all citizens as equally capable.

Local Governments and Services

As the Scandinavian Unitary Republic is a unitary state, municipal and regional governments, while not institutions of the Central Government, are subservient to it, and their function is minimal. Local governments have limited means to tax and may be funded additionally by the Central Government. Local governments exist in two categories: Municipal Administrative Districts administered by city style governments with mayors and municipal councils, and Regional Administrative Districts that cover rural areas outside the municipal districts, and are governed by Regional Commissions with the same capacities as the municipal governments. Local governments are responsible for maintaining most public services. Local Police Services are compelled to enforce all laws of the republic, both Central and of their respective administrative regions. The Central Government shall contribute some, but not all of the funding for local police forces, municipal governments providing the rest of the funding. Local governments shall fund emergency fire services. Emergency medical services are funded under the Central Healthcare Service, however, municipalities shall be responsible for contributing some funding to local services. Municipalities will maintain and provide for infrastructure such as local and regional roads, water and sewage services, parks, and other public services; while national infrastructure such as central motorways and national highways, as well as large-scale power grids connected to nuclear or hydroelectric energy shall be maintained by the Central Government. Finally, prisons are established, administered, and maintained by the Ministry of Justice, while jails for temporary incarceration by local authorities are maintained by local law enforcement.

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THE ROLES THE CURE REPLACES: A LOOK INTO SOCIAL
STRUCTURE WITH THE INVENTION OF THE CURE FROM
THE POSTMORTAL

Elizabeth Wang

There is a myriad of models meant to explain what it means to be human.

The models outline functions, processes, and theories all created to empirically understand the human experience. These ways of interpreting the inner-workings of the human brain provide key insights into how we explain things in our daily lives. Perhaps one of the most important models is the process of taking on a societal role. As we age, we are placed into different situations that force us to adjust, often requiring us to step into certain roles. According to leading sociologist Richard Schaefer, a social role is “a set of expectations for people who occupy a given social position or status” (418). In *The Postmortal* by Drew Magary, many characters choose to live a stagnant life. They choose not to take on certain roles that come with the normal aging process. As humans we value time, and are often in a rush to accomplish certain things. If given unlimited time through the development of a scientific cure for aging, as is the case in *The Postmortal*, people, frozen at whatever age they are in when they took the cure, choose not to take on certain roles. They thereby fundamentally alter the human timeline of a life. While the cure is only supposed to make someone stay a certain age, it also alters the mind into stagnation due to fact many are unwilling to take on developmental roles. Drew Magary’s *The Postmortal* causes the reader to reflect on the roles we fulfill and the consequences of potentially not assuming them.

The process of assuming many roles is often complex, consisting of several sequential steps, but the first of any is the process of anticipatory socialization. Anticipatory socialization is the progression of changing attitudes and behaviors in order to prepare to take on a new role. The attitude of the person becomes better suited to what they believe a person in the role should act. For example, in *The Postmortal* when the protagonist John gets ready to take the cure at the age of 27, which is still illegal at the time, he believes that he must be secretive. He plays into the hoax before getting the cure by saying “I was briefly disappointed that [the doctor] stopped referring to the cure as ‘the toaster.’ I really wanted to see how long we could keep it

up” (7). After this point, John is technically committing a criminal act; he is getting an illicit drug that alters his life, so, because he does not want to get caught, his brain psychologically causes him to act secretive about it. This is how he perceives those with the cure act; they must be secretive in order to not go to jail. John keeps referring to the cure as a “toaster” which allows him to distance himself from his illegal activity. Even if he is calling the cure a toaster, it does not change his actions. It is only a strategy to help justify that he’s made the right choice. He is anticipating the role he must take once he receives the cure, by prematurely acting this way.

We are unable to know how John was before the possibility of getting the cure, but even afterwards he must keep it a secret from most people. He adjusts his attitude in order to fit into his role of becoming a postmortal. He used the sociological idea of anticipatory socialization in order to fulfill his role. Interestingly, getting the cure requires people to step into an ambiguous role that is undefined and ultimately hard to fulfill because there are no guidelines to how a postmortal should act. Once it is legalized, it became a normal thing. To draw a contemporary parallel, the idea of the cure is similar to marijuana legalization. People have been criminalized for possession of something that is quite simply just an overpriced plant.

Similarly, the roles relating to marriage are warped with the development of the cure for aging: people no longer feel the need to spend the rest of their life with someone else. Marriage is a social institution, which Richard Schaefer defines as, “an organized pattern of beliefs and behavior centered on basic social needs” (418). Marriage fulfills several necessary human needs; however, these tasks are no longer required with the invention of the cure. Marriage provides reassurance when people age, but now people no longer need someone forever. With the cure, forever is not only 30 or 40 years with someone, it is much longer. To adjust to this, lawyers create cycle marriages, which prevent people from truly committing to the role of a married man or woman since a marriage expires after a certain preset number of years. John wants neither a cycle marriage nor he does not want to commit his whole life to one person. He states:

People got married before because they knew, deep down, that there would come a time in their lives when they would become too old, too ugly, and too infirm to have anyone care about them except their spouse. You needed someone to change your bedpan and help tie your shoes and all that. That’s all gone now Sonia. All that fear is gone. And whatever urge there is for people to find a lifetime companion... I don’t have that anymore. (79)

With the invention of the cure, people stay young and able-bodied for the rest of their lives. They no longer need the love and companionship that marriage guarantees an unwilling side effect of the cure. Marriage comes with

preconceived notions that are fulfilled by the cure, which causes many people with to cure to not marry. People traditionally marry for love, but marriage is also full of unspoken assumptions such as: companionship, financial security, and personal need. In old age, people have marriage to fall back to, but when the concept of aging is stopped, people no longer need these reassurances. They are able to support themselves throughout their lives, working and also traveling. All of the things John perceives he gets out of marriage can be satisfied a by his young age. Marriage, in many ways, is a method of growth, with the cure people no longer fulfill this role and thus do not grow from this experience.

With the ability to not age, some people may feel psychologically stuck in that given age. Age alters someone's perception of how they should act. Much of our life is based on how other people our age act. Our brain wires itself to behave according to the age our body is, the best example of this can be seen in Julia: a cure-aged eighteen year old who is actually forty-two. Although she is older, she feels a psychological need to act eighteen. She states, "'Still, I know all that stuff. But half the time I feel compelled to act like this stupid little girl.' 'It's like your body is dictating to your brain what role you should play'" (272). Her eighteen-year-old body creates a sociological drive to not age her mind. This stops critical thinking and all aging of the brain. One of the biggest reasons people advocated for the cure was to preserve the great minds. But the ability of the body not to age causes the mind not to age. People of great minds would no longer grow and could possibly not be able to make great scientific breakthroughs without the aging process. The mind and body are in a negative feedback loop with one another and this stagnate intellectual growth.

With living forever, the idea of leaving a legacy is erased. Some of the most influential historical people have left great legacies that people look to match. With the invention of the cure, great musicians, sports players, and other entertainers are living forever. It sets new standards of greatness that people new entertainers cannot match. People do this for a lifetime with the constant need to one up themselves. It redefines what we traditionally consider excellence. Magary writes about fictional baseball player Ryan Wexler:

Naturally, Ryan Wexler will break the record, but we all know it isn't because he is a better player than his predecessors. It's not a tragedy. It's just the cure forcing us to redefine the notion of excellence. This isn't just a baseball thing. This is an issue across the entire culture now. How can you be a success or have a legacy if your career-nay, your entire life- has no definitive story arc? (110)

The cure completely erases the ability to have a cure. If someone does die, then all of his or her records are able to be surpassed. Greatness is no longer how much skill someone has, it is just how much time the person

has to do that skill. Greatness and ability are redefined and it becomes almost impossible to be remembered for what someone has accomplished. People are easily forgotten and it devalues accomplishments and the value of a human life. The greatest players are now thrown to the side because there are so many great players. Once someone has died then they are easily replaced, greatness is constantly redefined with the next person becoming better than his predecessor. This new idea can force others to not grow into the people they are meant to be, stopping personal growth and not leaving a role to fill.

Although the cure may allow the body to live forever, it stops the mind from intellectually growing and alters the human experience. In many ways, *The Postmortal* follows the sociological impact roles play on certain people. It redefines the ideas of marriage, and legacies and stops growth. It is important that as a society we are ever-changing and evolving to the situations faced, role-taking is an important aspect of this. Roles are necessary because with each changing role, there is personal growth improving civilization. We must ensure that people do follow the necessary roles to grow as a people, making sure that something like the cure is never given to society.

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A WOMAN'S WORLD

Malayna Pottschmidt

"Ancient ploy: convince young girls they lack
some undisclosed quality of such importance
it's the only thing men and boys will ever want
them for, to persuade them they're so defective
they're lucky he's a cool guy who accepts all
the flaws no one else would put up with, a nice
guy who wants to help them feel beautiful
by inserting his penis, often without warning,
into their precious young bodies and use them,
their whole dear romantic trusting selves"

-So Much Synth, Brenda Shaughnessy

Bubblegum Defense

My Amazon shopping cart is a nightmare for potential rapists, murderers, kidnappers, and other types of scum that inhabit this earth. A one-and-a-half inch knife hidden into the guise of a house key to stab a perpetrator's face, or maybe his testicles. A canister of pepper spray to burn his eyeballs out, so he'll never be able to discern what or who his next victim would be. Last, but certainly not least, a stun gun to send twenty-five million volts of electricity through his body, each and every electrical surge sending an excruciating *fuck you* through each and every nerve in his body, especially the nerve he mustered up to attack me in the first place.

Did I mention every weapon is a bright, bubblegum pink? You know, the color of Bazooka bubblegum? The one that you chew so long it turns white and makes your jaw ache? After all, I have to send a symbolic message of 'girl power' when I'm roasting a rapist's chestnuts over the electrical, open fire of my stun gun.

But, this is all just hypothetical of course.

Insidious Companion

One month, I've known this guy for ONE MONTH. We both got out of relationships recently; we used each other for comfort, attention, and revenge. He's an absolute psycho. I mean- I even took mental disorder quizzes online answering questions based off of the way he acts.

big eyes staring

Yes, he is *that* crazy. I should have known something like this would happen to me.

Well, what happened?

He came over to my house one day. I was in the shower. He came into the bathroom to say hi. I told him hello, to wait in my room because I would be out in just a second. I could see him standing there for a little bit, and it already creeped me out. I went into my room and I could tell he was enraged. You know, that quiet yell. He was mad I was texting the ex of a girl who he tried to cheat on me with, well I don't know if it was cheating. We weren't official yet. I found it ironic, but like I said- the guy is crazy. It's not like I was flirting with the guy. He was just my friend, in my defense. He just overreacted. I put my clothes on, sat on my bed, and told him I was done. I don't care if he leaves, if I never speak to him again, and that was the truth. I didn't really care about him. He didn't like that too much, so he turned to a shelf in my room which carried a two week old bouquet of dead roses, picked up the vase, and threw the dead roses all over me and my bed in an act of anger. I mean petals, dead leaves, and thorns just covered my body. I told him to get the fuck out of my house. Next thing you know, he's arguing with me downstairs after I went down to throw the roses in the garbage. He's throwing pillows on the ground, stomping his feet like a two-year-old. I was still scared, though, after growing up with an abusive father and everything.

head nod, sympathetic look

His eyes were huge and animal like, a lot like my dad when he got ready to go after my mom. I told him to leave. He acted like he was going to; he opened the door to go. I ran upstairs, angry, nervous, and scared. I heard the door close and felt a sense of relief. Next thing you know, I'm sitting on my bed and hear footsteps coming up the stairs. He never left. One second he was screaming, yelling, calling me names, throwing things. Now he has this wild-eyed look and he's hovering over me so close I can feel the heat radiating off of his body. He's whispering creepy things in my ear and I zone out. I'm gone. My body is there. My mind is somewhere else, Purgatory maybe. I thought he was going to beat me or forcefully rape me or kill me. I was so scared.

fidgets hands

I freeze. I am paralyzed. He does what he wants with me and I'm just gone. No thoughts. I remember staring at the light on my ceiling. Light exists in darkness.

*What do you mean, he *finger quotation marks* 'does what he wants' with you?*

He had sex with me, or raped me. I don't feel comfortable calling it rape. I knew him. I didn't fight. I didn't say no. I didn't say anything. I was scared. I was paralyzed. After he was done, I resurfaced. I ran, naked in a blanket, to a closet in a locked room and cried. I bawled forever until I told my best friend to come over. He ran out of my house and I never saw him again.

Why didn't you go to police?

What would I tell them? “Hi officer, a man I have been having consensual sex with for a month just raped me... but I didn’t fight back... I didn’t say no.... and he was originally allowed in my house? That case would get thrown out. You and I both know it.

**partial scout* Well, you aren’t the type to just let things go.*

Well maybe I didn’t want to press charges. Maybe he didn’t know I didn’t want him to have sex with me. I was unresponsive. Maybe I don’t feel comfortable telling someone I was raped when I didn’t try to stop it, when I didn’t try to fight back. No one would believe me. The cop would make it look like my fault and wipe his hands clean of any wrongdoing. Plus, there are people who get raped brutally every day by complete strangers. I am not the same type of victim as them.

Or am I?

Like a Possum

Tweet

Layniebug @malaynap

6/6/16

Tonic immobility-aka “freezing” is completely natural when you’re scared. Media needs to pay more attention to rape victims who “freeze”

Layniebug @malaynap

6/6/16

Just because you didn’t respond, didn’t fight, didn’t scream.. Doesn’t mean something bad didn’t happen to you. It affects you the same

Layniebug @malaynap

6/6/16

Screaming and fighting is just as much of self preservation as completely going numb and not responding at all

Layniebug @malaynap

6/6/16

And if you went through that I want you to know I believe you 100% no matter what other people say.

Layniebug @malaynap

6/6/16

Law & Order SVU:

Olivia: People know fight or flight, but there is a third response and that is, you freeze.

Tutuola: Good luck selling that to a jury.

Oh, the frustrations.

Dress Code

Roaming the halls, I know there is a chance I will get busted. My hands are sweating as I'm scanning the halls for staff members. I managed to get through the first two classes by walking quickly in sync with other students, ducking when a teacher got close. Being shorter than everyone else helped, too. Now, though, it's just me. I'm out in the open like a lone gazelle waiting for a pride of lions to attack. At this point, it's inevitable.

"Excuse me, young lady. Those shorts are too short. What is your name? Go down to the office and have the secretary check the length," a short, stout man barks at me.

"Please, I just want to get to class. I'll pull them down. See? Finger-tip length," I plead.

"I'm sorry, but rules are rules."

He takes my name down and threatens that he will call down to the office to make sure I went. Most male teachers never send girls down to the office for their clothes because it makes them look like creeps. Why are they looking at a twelve year-old girl's shorts anyways? This guy didn't care though. I surmise, after a short walk to the office, that he is a Grade A Creepazoid.

Hesitating, I pull the heavy glass door backwards and enter the danger zone.

I manage to choke up a "Hi, ma'am. A teacher sent me down here for my shorts."

She peers at me with her square framed glasses sitting low on the bridge of her nose, postured stoically in her rolling chair. Giving me a once over, she picks up the black telephone. I can hear the dial tone in the background and it sounds like the soundtrack to my demise. I start to wonder why she is putting an excessive amount of energy into pressing the numbers

on the keypad, but I figure all she does is make phone calls and she wants to put some dignity in her meaningless profession. Mumbling something to an unknown voice, she nods her frosted gray head to the door of the back office.

My legs feel like cinderblocks, yet I manage to pick them up one at a time. An eternity passes by before a tall, African American woman with freckled skin pulls out a ruler, which just happens to be the same kind I use for my pre-algebra class. She places it just under the bottom of my shorts, analyzing the length between my shorts and my kneecap.

"I'm sorry, hon', but these are half an inch too short." She looks regretful and apologetic, as if I'm a puppy she just played with for an hour at the shelter then put me back in a cement cage.

"I don't get it. Why does it even matter if my shorts are half an inch too short? What is wrong with my shorts?"

She pauses, but eventually explains that I will "distract the boys" with my shorts.

I'm still not completely convinced, but I'm more concerned with the burgundy gym shorts I will have to wear if she makes me change. I'm not even wearing anything that matches those shorts. I make a half-genuine pout and shrug my shoulders.

That must have worked, because she grabs the bottoms of my shorts, pulls them down a little with a quick tug, and gives me a wink.

"Just keep them like this, and you'll be okay."

She says it as if she's been told this herself one too many times, as if once, she didn't keep her shorts long enough. As if once, she wasn't okay because of that.

Sick and Tired of Being Sick and Tired

Cover up. Take it off. You post pictures half naked? Whore. Hoe. Slut. You have no self-respect. Come on baby, he says, take that sweater off. Show me that sexy body. Stop being so modest. What are you, a nun? He pulls the shoulder of her sweater down. Stop. I don't want to do that. Why not, you prude? Show some skin. Give me some leg. Oh, she got raped? What was she wearing? A short skirt and heels. She was asking for it. Who dresses like a slut if they don't want to act like one? He high fives his pal. I would never let my girlfriend go out in that. I would never let my girlfriend post that. I would never let my girlfriend wear that, say that, do that. She has had sex with *how* many people? She's such a slut she will let anything with a penis in her. But you have had sex with more people than her. So, I'm a guy. It doesn't matter how many people we have sex with. The more, the better. For females, a lower body count means higher worth. Respect yourself. How insecure are you, to be showing your body like that? You think showing your body to whoever will give you love. You think attention will give you meaning, worth purpose. Why else would you show your body off like a product for sale?

How insecure are you, to be hiding your body like that? If you were secure with yourself, secure with your body, you would show it off. Brag. Be proud. No. You're wrong. It doesn't matter what she wears or what she shows. Women value different things. Some women feel empowered while showing their body. Some women feel empowered while covering up. I'm a girl, and even I think you're a whore if you show your ass, your tits, your skin like that. Free the nipple? Yeah, more like free to be a slut. It's okay, it's *encouraged* when an overweight female posts a body-positive picture, but if a female with what society calls a "sexy body" posts anything about body confidence- she's a hoe. She wants attention. She can't express her love of the vessel that holds her soul. Society: love yourself. Society: don't love yourself too much. Society: love yourself but don't show it. Or talk about it. Society: hide loving yourself until you hate yourself. Society: stop being so insecure. Society: you're confident in yourself? No, you're cocky. You think you're better than everyone. Noise. Do this. Yelling. Do that. Don't do this. Wear this. Say that. White. Fucking. Noise.

Liberation

I am an independent, confident, beautiful, funny, intelligent woman. I am a multifaceted diamond. I work my ass off. I love myself. I am professional. I can talk about sex. I can show my body and respect myself simultaneously. I will make you laugh until you cry. I can pay my own bills. I am ingenious. None of these contradict because I am everything. You can't stop me. You can't define me. I define me, and damn it- I love the diamond I refined from some worthless rock to a precious jewel you could only dream of being able to hold in your filthy hands. I'll be damned to let a man tell me who I am or what I value or the level of respect I have for me.

The Three Wise Women

Gold

She gets ready for work, painting her face for the mask she wants to present tonight. Pulling on her tight, spandex orange shorts, she realizes the bottom of her butt cheek is exposed. *Good*. Next, she puts her arms through the holes of an equally tight tank top, careful to not get her makeup on the cocaine-white shirt. The tops of her breasts are exposed and smooshed together like the food on a Thanksgiving dinner plate. *Excellent*. She steps out onto the floor of the restaurant. *Game time*. Four hours of heaving heavy trays full of wings, fries, and beers. Four hours of constantly checking her appearance in one of the full-body mirrors that cover the walls of the servers' break room. Four hours of taunting the men who get the "girl sized" beer until they order three "man sized" beers in hopes to preserve their ego in front of a pretty lady. Four hours of getting paid a little for her work, but a lot for the way she looks. Four hours later, she is four hundred dollars richer.

Frankincense

This wise woman is adorned in a see-through bedazzled G-string and pasties that don't quite cover her nipples fully. Her heels make an assertive clicking sound whenever she walks from one end of the room to the next. She is someone else, with a different identity. Her name could be Candy, Lola, Crystal. She could be whomever she wanted. It's eleven at night, her time to shine. It's her time to put on a show. She's not nervous, not anymore, at least. Every single night, hundreds of men come to watch her and the others. A woman and an erect metal pole that shines brighter than their wives' wedding rings. All she sees is the lights, shining on her like a movie star. All she sees is the sweat trickling down the forehead of a man with a receding hairline, and she can't help but chuckle. It's exhilarating. *They think I'm an object, but I'm laughing at them while they throw their whole paychecks at me. I am invincible.* Dollar bills swept away like trash, counted up by the ladies as they discuss their use of the cash. One is going to school to be a nurse. One is paying for her children's shelter, clothes, food. One just wants so much money that she will never have to depend on a man. *They're such suckers. They'll never get it.*

Myrrh

Goddess, Mistress, Owner, Princess. She's a professional dominatrix. Never does she give a man pleasure. One calls, *please let me serve you.* Financial domination, it's called. She sticks her perfectly pedicured feet in her midnight leather boots and plans on making him kiss them later. And he'll pay a hundred for each toe. He meets her in the parking lot of a bank. *Go to the ATM, withdraw one thousand, get on your knees in front of me, and beg me to take it.* Humiliation, these 'men' pay for it. To be degraded. To be used by a beautiful woman for nothing but his bank account. Sure, he may be crazy, but she gets paid. *Reparations, this money is reparations for the bullshit women had to go through. The only man worth a damn is a man on his knees and his wallet open.* She didn't have to touch him. She didn't have to kiss him. She didn't have to stroke his ego. All she had to do was tell him that he was only good for his money, and the safety deposit box full of cash was hers. *Iconic.*

Some women abhor and reject the stereotypes men put on them. They cover up, brag about their conservative job as a dental assistant and their lonely nights at home watching soap operas. Some women know the stereotypes are complete bullshit, yet entertain them to make a check off of the ignorant men that think these women are degrading themselves. That, my friends, is the real scam. That, my friends, is one way pussies grab back.

EDNA AND MITSUKO

Anu Kadampelil

Shakespeare's character Polonius from *Hamlet* stated it perfectly: "This above all: to thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man (1.3.78-80)". These words encapsulate the notion that before anyone can grasp the role they have in society, they must first understand who they are and what satisfies them. Women, specifically in the late 19th and 20th centuries, were seen as submissive beings that had no voice in any matter whatsoever. However, Kate Chopin and Shusaku Endo, authors of *The Awakening* and *Deep River*, respectively, rejected to use this approach when exploring the two women in their novels: Edna and Mitsuko.

Both characters were faced with adversity, but each of them overcame every obstacle they faced to achieve fulfillment in their lives. Throughout Chopin's *The Awakening* and Endo's *Deep River*, Edna and Mitsuko's journey to self-discovery illustrates how fulfillment can be obtained but comes with dire consequences.

Gratification is a feeling that many women did not fully receive back in previous centuries, due to archaic ways still being in effect. The United States in the late 19th century, where Edna's story took place, was a crucial moment that showed that women were undermined by their male counterparts. In the article, "The Cult of True Womanhood 1820-1860" written by historian Barbara Welter, she indicated the four traits of the ideal woman of the time: *piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity* (Welter, 1966).

These words carry negative connotations that illuminate that women were seen as property in the United States during this time; however, Edna did not fit the definition of the ideal woman. Throughout the novel, *The Awakening*, Edna proclaimed that she was overall bored and unsatisfied with her current living situation in Grand Isles, since she did not love her husband and was emotionless towards her children (Chopin, 1969, p. 29). She was willing to try new things and experience life to its full potential, but she was also faced with challenges along the way. In relation, Mitsuko, who lived in Japan during the 20th century, faced societal standards that were comparable to Edna's in the United States. According to Pulitzer Prize journalist Sheryl

WuDunn, who specializes in Asian culture, “A man is in heaven when he has an American house, a British salary, a Chinese cook and a Japanese wife (cited in Ito, 2001)”. WuDunn is emphasizing how a Japanese woman was imagined as being a hushed, loyal servant to her husband during this era. In *Deep River*, Mitsuko was an outgoing woman who never built a connection with her husband and felt she was incapable of loving (Endo, 1993, p. 67).

She felt the same dissatisfaction that Edna felt and wanted to have satisfaction in her life by going to India and discovering herself.

Unfortunately, both Edna and Mitsuko were forced to undergo changes that caused conflict to arise.

Completely changing a lifestyle to have fulfillment in a person's life is not a small decision to be taken lightly because it creates tensions from outside forces. Kimberly Radek, a professor of Women in Literature at Illinois Valley Community College, explains how women during Edna's time were restrained from participating in any sexual activity before marriage, but it was perfectly acceptable for a man to engage with servants (2008). This double standard is reflected clearly in Chopin's novel when Edna developed feelings for Robert and began her affair with Alcée (1969, pp. 34 & 106), showing that she was an independent woman that did not want to be tied down to her past conservative lifestyle. Many people did not approve of Edna's change of lifestyle, especially her husband, Mr. Pontellier. He took extreme measures to find the root of Edna's problem; he even went to a physician and told him “She's odd, she's not like herself (Chopin, 1969, pp. 88)”. Being true to oneself can be uplifting, for instance, in Edna's case, she had satisfaction in her life and understood her role in society, but it caused others hardship and worry over what would come next. As for Mitsuko, Anne E. Imamura, professor of sociology at Georgetown University, clarifies that Japanese women were expected to have children, fulfill household responsibilities, and marry only once in their life (1996, p.14). Based on these standards, Mitsuko was not the ideal Japanese woman during her time, since she had a failed marriage before her journey to India. Mitsuko's transformation was subtler than Edna's, considering that she never changed who she truly was but rather gained a new perspective on life. While in India, she encountered Otsu, an old college classmate, who gave her wisdom about “The Onion”, or God, and she took that information to the Ganges River to discover that it's “a river of humanity” (Endo, 1993, p. 211). She was finally able to see she was human and was allowed to make mistakes within her life. She also gained a better grasp on why Otsu worshiped “The Onion”, meaning her journey to India was not a complete waste. Both characters went through major changes, either mental or physical, but in the end, they each had to face consequences for their actions.

Self-discovery allows people to realize who they are in the world, understand their role in society, and gain fulfillment in their life, but it could

also come with drastic consequences. Edna spent the whole novel becoming the person that she wanted to become by cutting ties with her family, giving in to her sexual urges, and being an independent woman. Despite this, the one thing she wanted in life was Robert, the man she loved. However, Robert realized he could never act on his love for Edna and left for Mexico with a note saying 'I love you' (Chopin, 1969, p. 132-136). Robert's actions caused Edna to spiral into depression, knowing that the one thing that she truly wanted, she could never have. Therefore, she decided to do one final act: swim into the ocean, which ultimately led to her demise (Chopin, 1969, p. 139). The journey she went on indicates that people can get fulfillment by thinking of themselves, but if they do not get the item they desire most, then it could lead to unprecedented consequences. Similarly, Mitsuko was faced with unforeseen repercussions after discovering why she went on her journey to India. After understanding why Otsu worshiped "The Onion", she found the blood-splattered body of Otsu on the ground in pain, and when Mitsuko took him to the hospital, he took a "turn for the worse" (Endo, 1993, p. 211-216). Mitsuko's journey allowed her to finally determine that her decisions caused her to think she could not love, but in return, it brought suffering to those she knew. When someone considers finding fulfillment in their life, they should carefully evaluate how it will affect themselves and others around them.

Edna's and Mitsuko's pilgrimages toward self-discovery serve to highlight how fulfillment can be achieved through the act of being one's true self, but no matter what, there will be repercussions that are out of one's control. Even today, people are faced with obstacles that they wish they could escape and they choose to change and discover what they want in life. Fulfillment is never-ending journey that everyone must go through and will continue to go through until their very last breath.

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REPRESSED

Malayna Pottschmidt

Attempting to appreciate the beauty of the Sistine Chapel through a straw. One eye, one straw. You make out a curved line that most likely is the butt crack of an old Biblical man facing the Last Judgment. Straining to see over the tallest man's shoulders at your favorite artist's concert, then taking two steps either side and noticing that *everyone* is as tall as he is. You strain yourself, get on your tippy toes, and see the black handle of the microphone covered in specks of spit. A photo that you knew would just look absolutely BEAUTIFUL, just to have someone knock into you so it turns out like an unidentifiable smear.

Or, my childhood.

He grabs an almost archaic contraption and bounds up the stairs to my room.

"Layniebug! Remember that leaf presser Mamaw got you? It's a beautiful day to use it," he explains, eyes glazed over. It's six in the evening, prime time for a Bud Light, or eight. I didn't know it then, though.

He hadn't really done anything fun with me for a while, so I peer at him inquisitively. I am bored, and I feel like getting some fresh air. Plus, I love nature, so I hop out of bed. Click, I turn off the tiny silver TV I had. As I walk by, static caresses what little arm hair I have. He's already outside, searching for the perfect leaf to press flat and dry out like a business man's favorite dress shirt, splattered with his newborn's pumpkin and squash concoction from the day before.

He coaches me through the process. "Go look around, Layniebug! There are leaves all over the place. Just pick one that really stands out to you. We'll make a masterpiece."

It's the middle of June and the sun is beating on my auburn hair. I put my hand to my head and wonder if I could make a heated blanket out of the strands. Glancing at my father, I see a spear of fifty hairs plastered against his forehead. They're the color of Ken Doll's hair at most times, but the sweat darkens it and now he looks more like Jeffrey Dahmer. His thin, chapped lips grip a half-finished cigarette. I hate the smell of cigarette smoke, so I cover my nose with my hands dramatically. He notices, but continues to blacken his lungs. A perspired mixture of salt and beer drips down his moon-like cheek; little craters fill up and get drunk.

Dinnertime is always hideously loud and rage filled. The six of us don't sit together at a big table, circling each other and singing "Kumbaya", or whatever the hell it is families do when eating a meal. Last week, Dad made spaghetti. Then, he made spaghetti art. The snow colored wall in my living room was his blank canvas and a plate of spaghetti was his medium of choice. I've never seen someone so ridiculously angry, or maybe so ridiculously piss drunk, to the point where they hurl a heavy china plate against the wall above where they sleep. He covered his couch in spaghetti sauce, cow crumbles, noodles, and shards of the plate. My mother scrubbed, and still scrubs that spot on the wall. We don't have the heart to tell her it's stained for good, tinted with a little pink now. She probably knows. I like the abnormality on the bleached drywall. It's a memorial for the not-eaten spaghetti. After all, we were always told to clean off our plates. *What a waste of delicious pasta*, I think to myself.

In two months, on Thanksgiving, Dad will take the turkey out of the oven, set it out on the counter, and then yell at my mom for some miniscule reason. An argument will ensue, and soon enough, they start cooking like the turkey. Dad's timer will go off: *DING DING DING*. His alarm is much scarier than the one on the oven: two gigantic, bloodshot eyes, with huge black circles in the middle. You'll see humanity escape him, drained out by a demon or two. With two sweaty palms, he'll attempt to seize the two silver handles of the turkey pan. He'll slip, partially from the dampness encompassing his fingers and partially from the alcohol flooding his soul. The Devil will help him out, though, reasserting his posture. Hovering over him, like a shadow, Lucifer will get closer and direct Dad. He's more pliable after a beer, or two, or six. The Devil/Dad hybrid will then stomp menacingly towards the back door, realize his hands are full, and shove his shoulder blade against the black door handle. It will take him two full shoves to get the door open enough for him to fit through with the bird. Six steps to the grass, he won't even pay attention to how slippery the deck is. Devils don't worry about that sort of thing, I assume. An unadulterated snowfall will glisten beautifully until Dad hurls the pan at it. The darkened poultry in the blizzard resembles Snow White's visage, plagued with a boil. Devils don't like beauty, and they certainly aren't fond of Thanksgiving.

"Get up, get up! Rise and shine! Smell the coffee!" He waits six seconds, then busts through the door. "I told you guys we have a special adventure today! Get some clothes on. It's cold. Sweatpants, sweatshirt, who cares about your hair. You have twenty minutes." He shuts the door a little harder than he intended to, but the slam awakes us more than his attempt at rallying us up.

My sister looks over at me, yawns, and rolls her eyes. I do the same. It's a Sunday morning in early March, somewhere stuck in winter but inching toward spring. We both know we are in over our heads. We rarely do anything fun when we are at our dad's apartment, but when my dad decides he wants to do something entertaining, it's definitely not our version of entertainment. I get out of my bed first. The sheets are covered in polka dots that are varied shades of blue. Mariah, my sister, has identical sheets, but her polka dots are pink. Heading for the shower, I hear Mariah's bed quickly creak.

"I need to take a shower," she claims.

"Okay... same. That's why I'm about to get in right now," gesturing to my towel covered body, I lean into the shower to turn the faucet.

"I really should be able to take one first since I'm older, but whatever. Hurry up."

"Well you should have gotten up when you had the chance. Just cuz you're older doesn't mean you get whatever you want. Plus, you took a shower last night. You don't need to take another one for whatever 'adventure' Dad is taking us on." I have always been impeccable at the art of persuasion.

While I'm in the bathroom, attempting to wipe the foggy, condensation-covered mirror off with a hand towel, my dad cracks the bedroom door open. Mariah is sitting on her pink polka dots, wrapping a zebra patterned fleece sweatband around her head.

"Three minutes and we are out of here!" He pauses. "Well, I guess you can eat some cereal first. In three minutes I wanna see you out here eating Cap'n Crunch!"

Rolling my eyes at my reflection, I prop the door open. Cold air rushes against my arms, feet, and face. Goosebumps appear, so I re-wrap the towel to cover my arms. Mariah decided she didn't need another shower, so she's sitting on her bed fully dressed in sweatpants and a sweatshirt with old boots. I dry off and in the blink of an eye, I look the same as her. My headband is cheetah print, though, and MUCH cuter. We walk out of the door and somehow, an hour later, end up in the middle of a park where Native Americans once lived. We're here to search and sift through dirt for arrowheads.

"Dad, really? On Sunday, our day of *rest*, you're making us do hard labor?" I protest.

"Listen, it's only for a couple of hours. Just humor me. I promise you'll have fun and ask me to bring you back here in two weeks."

Mariah and I peek at each other, giving two eye rolls with enough attitude filled-energy to flip the world upside down. There are seven other people in our group; all here to sift through dirt in hopes of finding buried treasure. An overly enthusiastic guide takes us through the history of the park, tells us the rules, and shows us how to sift through our designated dirt piles. She gets very loud when she tells us that if we do find anything of worth, the park gets to keep it. My dad looks a little bummed, but quickly shakes off any negative energy for the moment. He's in his element. We all put thick gloves on because who knows what's in that dirt. Huge plastic bags of dirt are placed by each of our stations. We all have our own sifting box, which is the size of the bottom of a small dog cage. Tiny squares are cut out of the bottom metal to let the dirt fall through and the large pieces to emerge.

I sift for an hour and forty-six minutes. I sift through the dirt that the Delaware and Miami Native American tribes built their lives on. I sift through the dirt that the white men marched onto to order the Natives to vacate their homes. I sift through the dirt that tired daughters have sifted through before, dragged along unwillingly. I sift and find nothing but more dirt, bigger clumps of ugly dirt. For a moment, I wish I wouldn't have come at all.

The three of us walk on the pebbled trail, winding through the foliage and the fields of wheat. My dad turns and analyzes a white flower on the ground. As he is crouching, giving this tiny organism his full attention and wonder, his hair gleams as golden and pure as the wheat to the right of him. He looks genuinely happy, clean, and pure. Even though a cold, brisk air chills my body, the sunshine warms my soul. I'm glad I came.

Someone is banging on my front door, ringing the doorbell frantically. My mom sprints to the window, throws the blinds open, drops her jaw, and heaves the door agape. My sister barrels through the entryway, tears pouring out of her eyes. Snot is running out of her nose. She spits as she screams at the horror she just faced. No one can understand her, but after two minutes, we know what happened. She's in middle school; seventh grade basketball practice ends and my dad is there to pick her up in his blue 1997 Ford Expedition. His eyes are glazed over and he slurs his words.

"Heeeeyyy, hunny. Howwaz practice? Make a lot of," he gestures as though he's shooting a basketball, "hoops?"

Mataya stays silent for most of the ride home, only four minutes of drunken babbling to deal with. They're on the street closest to our neighborhood. There are no streetlights and the speed limit is thirty-five miles an hour. My dad, in his drunken stupor, analyzes the speed limit as twice the posted number. He's pushing seventy, and Mataya tells him to slow down. They're about to turn into the neighborhood. His brain slowly recognizes that the turn is quickly approaching as he tries to stop and turn simultaneously.

SLAM! CRACK! CRASH! BAM! WHACK! BOOM!

He crashes forcefully into our neighborhood sign. The stone breaks into a billion pieces, injured pebbles sprawled against the pavement. The light post that once illuminated the bright red letters on the sign lay in the middle of the road, split in half. The shards of glass gleam innocently against the night sky. The two sit in awe for one minute. They're alive- or are they dead? Surely this can't be Heaven. Mataya, horrified, looks at Dad like he's some grotesque, possessed demon. She opens the door, caved inwards, but still working. She sprints home despite the pain, adrenaline rushing through her veins. *Who was that demon? Why did he want my dad?*

I twist the red knobs on my leaf presser: one, two, three, four. Lifting up the wooden top that is painted with fairies and flowers, I await what masterpiece I created. I remove the two sheets of white paper and the cardboard piece that cover my Sugar Maple leaf.

I was supposed to wait for at least two weeks, but I only waited for one. I just want to peek, which is why I am alone in this secret mission. When I see the leaf, my heart breaks. It looks greyer and frailer. It was once beautiful, vibrant, lush, and I killed it. *Why did my dad do this?* The leaf is much smaller now than it once was. I try to pick it up; I try to comfort it. The top crumbled off. It wasn't my idea though. Dad told me to. I was just a pawn in his game of destruction. I'm an accomplice, nonetheless. I am disgusted and ashamed.

Twisting the knobs back on, I throw the leaf press into the back of a cabinet. I hope no one will ever find it, especially not my dad. Especially not me. I run back inside. One day, it will be covered in cobwebs. One day, I will forget it ever existed. The leaf will still be there, disintegrating over decades, wondering why I let it die. Wondering why I let it be forgotten.

SINK OR SWIM

Serena Maag

I've watched many people walk by me throughout the years. I've seen them at their worst, and at their best. I've followed them as they'd race by to get to class or go for a casual stroll to admire the scenery along the sidewalk. I've observed them as they all grow into intelligent young adults. Knowing this, one can infer what my favorite time of the year would be. Each year as fall rolls around, and a new school of students comes swimming in, I pick one to keep a special eye on. They always appear to be the same as all the other freshman at first, just going along with the current. However, this one stuck out, catching my attention.

My view of her is very limited. She walks by between 5 to 10 times a day giving me only a few seconds to observe her. But within these few seconds a few times a day, I can discover more about her than most can by spending the whole day with her. What gives me the advantage is the fact that she knows I exist as a wooden object to rest herself or her books upon, but she doesn't know that I am actually here. I have the opportunity to see her in her individual and raw state. Without any façades, without any outside influences, and that's my favorite form of her.

The first day she came into my view was at 9 am on the first Wednesday of classes. I could tell she was trying to fight the typical "freshman's first day" stereotype. She was trying her hardest to flow with the rest of the sea of students. She even had her most college-y outfit on, a maroon sundress paired with suede, beige booties that clicked when they hit the sidewalk with the iconic sound of maturity. But I could also tell that there was a deeper conflict preventing her from fully blending in. I know now that she's a very stubborn and independent person, which is the hardest thing to be on a college campus. Conformity is all around her. At times she doesn't even know she's conforming, and neither do others until it's too late. They've lost sight of who they really are. Her conformity started small. As I gazed at her on her way to class, I observed as she looked around and noticed everyone on their phones. Subconsciously and without reason, she too begins to thumb aimlessly through her various social media accounts. After sufficiently scanning anything from Instagram to Facebook, she still has a minute left to go in her walk to class but nothing left to distract herself with. This is when I see the realization wash over her. She realizes that even though this small act of conformity didn't have any real impact on her life, it could easily send her down a slippery slope of mass conformity. However, even with this realization, she struggles to find herself in this new lifestyle.

Over the next couple of days I watch as she lets the current drag her past my same bolted down spot. Her book bag weighing her down more and more every day. Slowly she begins to slip into a geriatric stature. The bags under her eyes getting darker with every hour of sleep missed. She quickly trades in her first day outfit for cotton sweatpants and a comfy, worn-down t-shirt. This is what I like to call the drop off. I see it in every freshman. It's the moment when they've reached their maximum tolerance of stress and workload. This is when they have to decide for themselves whether they'll sink or swim. Sinking is easy. Sinking is quick. It could seem like the best option to someone in such a sleep deprived, overloaded state. On the other hand, swimming is a lot harder. Swimming takes dedication. Swimming takes endurance. Swim is what she did...kind of.

These next weeks were my favorite weeks to observe. I got to witness her horrible, beautiful struggle on her swim back up for air. Each day brought on a new obstacle. You might be asking yourself, "Now, you said you only saw her for a few fleeting seconds every day. How could you possibly know what obstacles she was facing in those few seconds?" It's quite easy with this one. You simply look at the way her eyes and mouth are turned and what she's holding in her hands. However, you can't find her struggles if she's talking to someone. I have watched as her whole body language changes in a fraction of a second if someone addresses her. Whether she knows them or not, whether it's just to say "Hey" or to actually have a conversation with her, she immediately puts up a façade. Now, that's not to say that she's pretending to be something she's not. No, she's pretending to be a part of her that she isn't right now. She's putting on a happy face, as some might call it. Whether she does this to not worry others, or if she's trying to trick herself into being that happier side of herself, is still up for debate. But soon after that distraction moves on, I can witness this façade slowly fade out and her struggles creep back in.

The first struggle I noticed concerned genetics. Not her genetics specifically, please I'm just a bench not a psychic geneticist. I'm referring to her genetics class; BI 210 with Professor Grant. Very quickly, she realized that this class was going to be a lot harder than she thought. The first days or even week of classes are usually review days. Days that should help you get a smooth transition from dipping your toe into the water to completely submerging yourself. I could tell, that very first day, that her journey was more of a forced cannon ball. You know, the kind of cannon ball where that one uncle, who's more of a kid than you are, picks you up and throws you

into the pool without so much as a warning or an ask of permission. You could see this in her eyes and her mouth, like I said. Her eyes were opened slightly wider than they were on the way to class, and they gave off an almost shocked, glazed over look. Her mouth hung a little lower than before, almost as if the corners of her lips were being pushed down ever so slightly by her fingers. She floated past me and down the sidewalk, just rolling through the motions almost hypnotized by the daunting amount of material unknown. The next day I scanned impatiently for her, breathlessly waiting to see whether she'd return triumphant or defeated, as so many were. Finally I see her, and I settle comfortably into my wooden frame, as I can spot from a mile away a confident stride in her walk. She hugs a book boldly labeled *GENETICS* down its spine tightly against her peach polyester blouse. Her posture says she has now become the master of this obstacle. Nothing can stand in her way. Then I watch the walk back after class. Once again, she's deflated. Any confidence she had has been drowned in the vast unknowing that is genetics. The book hangs precariously from one hand down by her side, almost as if she'd be perfectly okay with letting it slip through her fingers and never picking it up again. I gazed as she shuffled down the sidewalk back to her dorm, her safe haven. The next day, I once again am left wondering when she will pass by. However, this time I don't know what to expect. Will she return triumphant once more? Will she return equally as discouraged as yesterday? Will she return at all? This is her sink or swim moment. I peer down the path to her dorm, and I see her once again on her daily trek. However, she's neither of the things I thought she'd be. She's neutral. She has an average expression on her face to match the average look to her stride to match the average faded grey and black tones in her cotton t-shirt and leggings. She has decided to half swim. But you see, the thing about half swimming is that it's very difficult to keep up. The one arm and one leg doing all the work will eventually get tired. And the other half of you, having already checked out on the whole experience will not step in to help, leaving you to sink. So even though this method seems to be keeping her sufficiently afloat for now, it will soon leave her to sink. She knows that. She just needs time to learn how to swim.

Her body image was her next struggle. I find it very common among freshman females especially. In her case, she came in to college from a very active high school experience. These first couple weeks or so, she wore whatever she wanted with confidence in her fit physique. I noticed the switch in these last few weeks. Her clothes changed from anything to strictly baggy. If she were to wear a clingy blouse, I would watch as she lightly tugged at it, pulling it away from her body so as not to form to her curves and rolls. I would see her peer from left to right, suddenly becoming aware of everyone else's body type compared to her own. Unfortunately, this is another sink or swim situation. She knows it too. She could either choose to make a change

so that she's comfortable with how she looks, or continue down the path she's on accompanied by lack of self-confidence and self-esteem. Once again, she decides to half swim. I observe as she carries a salad with her for lunch, and leaves Starbucks with only fruit cups in her hands instead of her usual Venti White Chocolate sugar laden Mocha. She knows that this won't be enough. She knows that this is only half of the problem. She knows she has to exercise like she did in high school. She knows she has no more room to sink. She just needs time to learn how to swim.

As the days add on like miles walked, she is worn in to a daily groove. Now she only shuffles past me, lacking any energy. She clings to her books as if they're the difference between life and death. Are they? I see her contemplating which will be more important today, her schoolwork or her health. Her schoolwork seems to win over as her hair is left tangled and the imprints from her nap, instead of a night's sleep, are still left on her face. It's funny how to be successful in the future she jeopardizes even having a future. She sees the irony, it shows in her eyes. They seem to laugh with exhaustion, cry with fear, and smile with promise. She finds each day to be a new struggle, a new battle, a new obstacle. Some days, she crumples under new tasks. Others, she rises above. But each day she's faced with the question; should I sink or swim?

SCHOOLS FOR CRIME: THE VALUE OF A NON-TRADITIONAL EDUCATION IN *BREAKING BAD*

Gabrielle Raab

In today's society, we give high regards to those who are educated and put great value into the education system. However, do members of society only find purpose if they are book smart and receive a traditional education? Or, do street smarts have the capability to earn their value in society as well? In Friedrich von Schiller's short story, "The Criminal of Lost Honor" (1786), and Vince Gilligan's hit TV show, *Breaking Bad*, the value of receiving a "street education" becomes evident. In addition, a parallel can be seen as each of the main characters, Christian Wolf and Jesse Pinkman, undergo their criminal advancement through these "schools for crime." As each of the characters progress throughout the short story and television series, the value of this alternative form of education is unveiled and comparison to today's traditional and respected educational system can be drawn.

In the TV show *Breaking Bad*, creator Vince Gilligan ensures that the stereotypical roles of teacher and student are apparent throughout every episode. It is clear that Walter White, the high school chemistry teacher who turns to cooking crystal meth after receiving a diagnosis of terminal lung cancer, takes on the position of the educator both inside the traditional classroom as well as inside the meth lab with Jesse. In contrast, Jesse assumes the role of the student. Despite having previous experience with the meth-making business, Jesse is aware that there is a lot he can learn and take away from Mr. White's experience with chemistry. However, both Jesse and Walt are failures in these roles that they assume, that is, until they encounter one another. Jesse is in a low position on the street hierarchy and Walt's students never care to listen to his lectures about chemistry. However, once they join together, their roles are truly fulfilled. In the episode "Crazy Handful of Nothin'", Vince Gilligan demonstrates these positions. As Walter can no longer proceed in creating his batch of meth due to a coughing fit, he encourages Jesse finish cooking. Walter says, "Go on, you do it. You can do it! If you have any questions I'll be right here" (12:47). In this scene, Walter's teaching perspective becomes evident to viewers. As a traditional school teacher, it is Walter's job to spread his knowledge of chemistry unto his students. This is exactly what Walter does, but just in a different manner. His encouragement towards his students, particularly Jesse, is displayed as well. However, what do these roles of teacher and student contribute to the value of the education system? As Jesse is educated by Mr. White's superb meth-making skills in his "school for crime," the value of street smarts is truly demonstrated.

Jesse never found use in having knowledge of typical school subjects or even doing well in school for that matter; however, he has found value in the meth business. As Walt pushes him constantly to do better and to try harder, he is forced out of his shell and is able to finish the batches of meth by himself and confront people he would have never been able to prior to these crime lessons. Truly, the value of these street smarts for Jesse lies within the fact that he enabled and forced to do things he did not think he could. On the other hand, it also earns him countless amounts of money, which one would assume becomes his one goal. However, despite this outside view of money being both Walt and Jesse's driving force, the value of this alternative form of learning is the real goal behind it all. Without further investigation, it appears as if the two characters are only in the business for its monetary outcome, but they both do so in a dispassionate manner. Vince Gilligan includes countless scenes with Jesse and Walt cooking meth with unique angles and loud music playing in the background for a very specific purpose. This is to show that there is no driving force behind it all and although they buy cool cars together and seem to be infatuated with the idea of money, deeper insight shows that they value these student and teacher roles as well as the value of this non-traditional education. Society drills into our mind that if you do not pursue a college career or some form of higher education, you are doomed to be part of the stereotypical lower class. Jesse and Walt prove this theory wrong with their meth-making business. Street smarts do have a purpose in society and those who choose to use it to their advantage will be able to see its true value.

Furthermore, the value of schools for crime is also exhibited throughout Friedrich Schiller's short story. Just as Jesse found no use in a normal education, Christian Wolf degrades society and finds no value in the people or jobs available to him. Christian initially turns to the crime of poaching in order to attract the affection of a woman who, due to his unattractiveness, has no interest in him. The forest warden, however, is after the same woman and therefore sees that Christian is given the maximum penalty for his crime and since he is a repeat offender, this means a three-year stay in the dungeon. Christian is bound to the dungeon as a social outcast and a change occurs within him. Schiller writes, "And so I finally became accustomed to the most repulsive behaviors, and in my final months there, I had even surpassed my teachers" (43). Christian obtained his street smarts through the dungeon, which served as his school for crime and he even went

as far as exceeding those who taught him. Similar to Jesse, Christian found absolutely no purpose in going back to normal society because they always found a way to rebuke him, hence the repetition of his criminal offense. However, he was able to discover value in criminal acts. This is due to the fact that he was never accepted in a normal society and when he left the dungeon, the criminal underworld gave him the honor for which he was truly searching. The value of this non-traditional education for Christian is that it ultimately led him to a place where he felt accepted by those around him.

Despite the fact that the schools for crime transformed both Jesse and Christian into criminal men, each character is still able to hint to the viewer or reader that they still have goodness hidden beneath all of the layers of criminality and deviant behavior on the outside. This is shown in the episode “Cancer Man” from *Breaking Bad*. As Jesse faces his paranoia and heads back home, his righteous nature is let out of its shell. Jesse sets the table and prepares for dinner (28:27). Although there is a part of him that is only doing this to tug at his parents’ heartstrings, Jesse, however, truly reveals a sense of compassion and caring in this scene. In comparison, this inherent goodness is displayed in Christian when, near the end of Schiller’s story, Christian feels guilt for his sins and this pushes him to confess even though he knows he will be executed. Schiller writes, “I betrayed myself of my own free will – and that God will have mercy on him some day, as he will on my now – plead for me, old man, and shed a tear on your report: I am the Innkeeper of the Sun” (55). Without any sort of virtuous nature within him, Christian would have never been pushed to confess his wrongdoings. Although he was transformed into a criminal by the men in the dungeon and they compelled him to commit his life to crime, there are still righteous aspects of Christian that shine through.

Furthermore, although both the traditional education system and this alternate form of “street school” or schools for crime differ in many ways, there are also several parallels that are evident. Street and drug-trade education only appear to care about the product produced and the education system mirrors this fact. Today’s schools across the country merely want to manufacture children that are taught to be exactly the same through standardized testing. Just as Jesse and Walt are focused on creating one consistent product in their “school” and the men in the dungeon are focused on creating criminals in theirs, so is today’s educational system intent on creating homogenous learners. When Jesse and Walt create unsatisfactory meth, they throw it out. When people in the dungeon are not converted to criminal beings, they are tormented or killed. In a similar way, the education system merely wants every single child to meet each of the standards and they have to do so in a uniform way. If not, they are deemed unfit for furthering their education or for being successful members of society.

In conclusion, the value of schools for crime is exhibited through both of the characters discussed, Jesse from Vince Gilligan's TV show, *Breaking Bad* and Christian Wolf from Friedrich Schiller's short story, "The Criminal of Lost Honor." The parallel found between both Jesse and Christian and their criminal advancement helps to display the true value of obtaining street smarts in comparison to a traditional education. Despite the fact that both characters are criminals at first glance, they are truly just and righteous in nature. Additionally, the value of this alternative form of education is evident throughout both works and provokes an intriguing comparison to and questioning of the traditional education that is implemented today. Although schools for crime may not be considered mainstream or even accepted by most people, street smarts have truly earned their place in society.

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ANALYSIS OF *THE METAMORPHOSIS*

Sydney Stoops

Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* is an early twentieth century novella depicting the transition of a man, Gregor Samsa, from human to insect and the complications he faces in his new form. Not only does his transformation affect himself, but also the members of his family, specifically his father and sister. There are many examples of transformation in the story, both physical and behavioral, that are expressed in both symbolic and literal forms. Kafka's clever use of symbolism caters to the allegorical style of his work and successfully illustrates a theme of maturity and alienation.

The first transformation is a physical one. Gregor wakes up first thing in the morning and realizes that he has been transformed into a giant insect (Kafka 89). Gregor's immediate reaction seems somewhat understated and surprisingly rational. He is less worried about being a giant insect than he is about the issue of getting to work on time in order to provide for his family. Through Gregor's work driven anxiety the reader can make the connection that a steady income holds Gregor's importance to his family. This use of Gregor as a piggy bank creates the image of him as an object to the family. He is alienated from the customs of the lifestyle and household that he pays for and is rarely home to regain his place as a family member. The transformation of Gregor into an insect, specifically a creepy crawly one, symbolizes these feelings of alienation.

The feelings of alienation, as well as an air of immaturity about the family, are confirmed by the reaction of Gregor's father when Gregor reveals himself in his insect form. As soon as Gregor opens his bedroom door his mother faints and Gregor's father, "knot[s] his fist with a fierce expression on his face as if meant to knock Gregor back into his room" (Kafka 100). Why did Gregor's father express anger towards his son rather than remorse? All Gregor is to his father is a source of income. The only reason Gregor works at a job he hates is to pay off debts for his father. All Gregor wants is to be accepted and appreciated by his father. His father gladly accepts the money and seems to appreciate it, but as soon as Gregor is unable to provide for the family he loses all appreciation for Gregor's hard work.

Because of Gregor's new inability to work, his father must find a way

to provide for the family; so he becomes a bank messenger. After some time, a clear physical transformation is seen in Gregor's father due to his new job. Gregor notices this change from his position on the floor, "Now he was standing there in fine shape; dressed in a smart blue uniform with gold buttons, such as bank messengers wear; his strong double chin bulged over the stiff high collar of his jacket; his onetime tangled white hair had been combed flat on either side of a shining and carefully exact parting," (Kafka 121). This description of Gregor's father gives him a sense of authority and fitness, qualities he lacked in the beginning of the story where he lounged on a chair all day and exhibited a round belly. After his appearance is noted, Gregor's father attempts to injure or even kill Gregor by throwing apples at him; one gets lodged in poor Gregor's back. This act of anger differs from the clenched fist of the father who didn't throw a punch when Gregor first revealed himself. This change in physical manner is representative of Mr. Samsa becoming the head of the family again. He has matured, regained his confidence and stature, and now assumes his paternal place in the household as breadwinner and leader.

Gregor's father is not alone in his recent maturing. Throughout the novella Grete transforms into a strong and confident young woman. In the early stages of Gregor's life as an insect, it is Grete's job to feed him and clean up after him. She does so out of respect and love for her brother and hopes that he will eventually return to his human state. Though as time goes on, she realizes that he is not getting better and he is becoming a potential threat to the family. She eventually stops cleaning his room and feeds him less and less. Grete's depleting affection for the bug, which she believes is no longer Gregor, reflects on her growing analytical and rational way of thinking. As children become adults, they focus on more important things in life, and right now the important thing in Grete's life is keeping her family afloat. Her maturing attitude is confirmed through her plea to discard Gregor: "I won't pronounce the name of my brother in front of this monster, and so all I say is: we have to try to get rid of it. We've done everything humanly possible to take care of it and to put up with it as far as humanly possible," (Kafka 133). Grete expresses a sizeable amount of control with her parents. Prior to Gregor's transformation, Grete was barely noticeable and simply did as she was told. Her newly gained confidence and wisdom eventually lead to Gregor's death and prosperity of her family.

Gregor's mental transformation and descent into complete alienation work in complete sync with the maturing of the other characters. The positive transformations personally affect Gregor's worsening condition. As Grete matures, she cares for Gregor less which causes him to become ill and eliminates most forms of human-insect interaction. When Gregor's father regains his fitness and dominance, Gregor ends up with an apple lodged in his back, thus weakening him further and forming an emotional detachment

between the father and son. All of these events cause Gregor to feel less human. When Kafka writes, "Gregor realized that after the lack of all direct human speech for the past two months together with the monotony of family life must have confused his mind," (116) it can be inferred that the shunning of Gregor has made him unfamiliar with the human feelings he used to possess. He soon enough loses the ability to communicate with humans and even enjoys crawling under the bed and on the walls and hanging from the ceiling. As his actions and thoughts become more insect-like, he loses his family's affections; he is no longer seen as a family member, the ultimate alienation.

Gregor attempts to fight this alienation by sneaking out of the room and peeking out of his door. This final act of resistance gets the family in trouble and creates the idea that Gregor must go; but instead of being killed or let loose, Gregor is found dead in his room, completely deteriorated, symbolizing his exhaustion with always trying to please his family. This, to me, is the biggest transformation in the entire novella. Gregor didn't fight his death; he accepted it because he knew it would benefit his family, a family that couldn't live with his burden any longer. This final acceptance is realized in Gregor's last thoughts before death, "The decision that he must disappear was one that he held even more strongly than his sister, if that were possible," (Kafka 135). The final stage of Gregor's physical transformation was death.

Because Gregor's maturity coincides with that of his family members, there must be a final stage of transformation for the family as well. After Gregor finally dies, his parents notice that Grete has grown into a socially acceptable young woman capable of marriage: "They grew quieter and half unconsciously exchanged glances of complete agreement, having come to the conclusion that I would soon be time to find a good husband for her," (Kafka 139). The end of Gregor's life marks the beginning of a new life for the rest of the family. In order for the maturity and prosperity of the family to occur, Gregor had to undergo complete alienation and retrogress into nothing.

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LOSS OF UNRECOVERABLE PURITY

Kade Roach

Since its release in the early 1990's, many powerful statements about *The Virgin Suicides* have been asserted. Some of which have come from Francisco Collado-Rodriguez's essay, "Back to Myth and Ethical Compromise: Garcia Marquez's Traces on Jeffrey Eugenides's *The Virgin Suicides*." In a statement that stands tall among others, Collado-Rodriguez says the destruction of the earth is caused by the patriarchal ideology that has replaced the ancestral wisdom of Mother Earth. The neighbors in *The Virgin Suicides* await the suicides of the Lisbon girls in hopes that it will somehow bring about the continuity of life like primitive spectators in a mythical ritual (Collado-Rodriguez, 36). This statement is powerful because it's not an assertion that can be justly made from merely reading from the surface of the novel. It might sound a bit absurd at first, but if taken into careful consideration when going back through the novel, the statement proves to have merit. When one reads *The Virgin Suicides* to only find out why the girls commit suicide, a lot of details and descriptions Eugenides includes seem out of place and unnecessary. However, these details make complete sense when read with the idea of the world's dying purity in mind. In Jeffrey Eugenides's *The Virgin Suicides*, the Lisbon girls symbolize purity and through their deaths, show Earth's purity can't be retained from the irresponsible environmental actions humans commit.

One clue that Eugenides includes to show the Lisbon girls represent purity is through the exhibits the boys keep. The Lisbon sisters have a different aura about them than the rest of the characters in the novel, which is even noticed by the other characters. They are differentiated from the other characters to the extent that a group of boys keep exhibits about them to help document their existence and maintain a vivid memory of them. The narrator frequently refers to these exhibits: "The next day...accompanied by a grainy picture of the girls embracing the tree (Exhibit #8)" (Eugenides, 178), "A photo survives of that night (Exhibit #10)" (Eugenides, 114), "We regret to say that this photograph, Exhibit #47, was recently found missing from its envelope" (Eugenides, 223), "(#32) Cecilia's canvas high-tops yellowing

beyond remedy of toothbrush and dish soap,” (Eugenides, 241). Some readers might not think much of the exhibits, as it is possible to think of the boys as only infatuated with the girl’s beauty, which leads them to keep some items about them. Although, it appears that Eugenides meant the exhibits to represent more than just superficial mementos. The high frequency to which they’re brought up and the significant amount of them, at least 47, seems to inquire that the boys have the exhibits in hopes of figuring out the mystery surrounding the sisters. It isn’t clear what the mystery is, even by the end of the novel, but the various exhibits imply the boys think the sisters may have been more than average teenage girls committing suicide for a higher purpose. Towards the end of the novel the narrator speaks of the current state of the exhibits and says, “We haven’t kept our tomb sufficiently airtight, and our sacred objects are perishing” (Eugenides, 241). Notice how Eugenides includes the words tomb and sacred objects to describe the exhibits and how they’re stored. This diction seems to indicate the exhibits are much more valuable to the boys than just some items they kept in order to remember their first crushes. The words “tomb” and “sacred objects” also suggest that there is something about the girls that is noble and holy, which the boys can sense and would suffice as a proper explanation for having the exhibits.

The exhibits are only one of the signs Eugenides places in the novel that suggests the girls are different from all of the other characters in a meaningful and impactful way. In order to symbolize purity, the girls must be different from all of the other characters that have numerous flaws, due to purity being a divine quality. Other clues that Eugenides includes to show the Lisbon girls symbolize purity is through his descriptions of the girls, that at times, give the sisters a magical feel. Throughout various times in the novel Eugenides carefully selects his diction to describe the girls as larger than life, such as in the very first chapter when he describes Cecilia being taken to the hospital, “Under the molting trees... the two slaves offering the victim to the altar (lifting the stretcher into the truck), the priestess brandishing the torch (waving the flannel nightgown), and the drugged virgin rising up on her elbows, with an otherworldly smile on her pale lips” (Eugenides, 4). By referring to the paramedics as slaves tending to Cecilia, Eugenides is symbolically giving her a noble feel. The details of the altar and the priestess give Cecilia a sacred and holy essence. The passage as a whole reads as if it’s talking about a sacred ceremony for a dying ruler. Surrounding Cecilia and the other sister with feelings of nobility, sacredness, and holiness makes it more plausible to believe they symbolize purity. One passage that inspires a noble and sacred feel is not nearly enough to try to prove the sisters represent purity.

In another powerful passage, Eugenides makes a more direct reference to the sisters being more than normal teenagers when the narrator

says, "The girls took into their own hands decisions better left to God. They became too powerful to live among us, too self-concerned, too visionary, too blind" (Eugenides, 242). This statement is very compelling because it conveys the girls had a greater purpose in the world due to having great power and a selfless attitude. In this passage, Eugenides directly says they're powerful and even associates them with God, taking their sense of power to an entire new level and re-associates a feeling of holiness around them. He also gives a sense of virtuousness behind their actions by saying they couldn't live among self-concerned people. These added feelings from this passage give the sisters even more credibility to symbolize purity. Even long after their deaths, the boys can't seem to get the Lisbon sisters out of their minds. A reference is made to the boys receiving visits from the girls in their dreams when the narrator says, "Many of us continued to have dreams in which the Lisbon girls appeared to us more real than they had been in life, and we awoke certain that their scent of the next world remained on our pillows" (Eugenides, 233). This passage could be interpreted as just the boys dreaming of the girls they once loved, but if taking the other two passages into consideration, it makes sense that Eugenides could be hinting at a higher power the girls possess. The fact that he says the girls seem even more real in their dreams and mentions the next world leads me to believe that he could be referring to their power and very much reminds me of the way people speak of God, which reiterates the feelings of holiness and sacredness. A few pages later Eugenides even refers to the suicides as the exodus when he says, "The exodus was short-lived, however" (Eugenides, 240). In the exodus Moses leads the Jews out of Egypt and to freedom in a very holy and noble action. It seems that Eugenides made this reference to give the reader incentive to parallel the Lisbon sisters to Moses. In the girl's case, they are distraught from seeing the environment decay away before them, so in an effort to return Earth's purity, they commit suicide. They are pure beings, so in a way, they're sacrificing their pureness to return what was taken of Earth's. They are almost trying to lead the people around them to a better Earth. By describing the girls in these ways Eugenides gives them credibility to symbolize purity.

A final clue Eugenides includes to show the Lisbon girls are eligible to represent purity is the fact that they're virgins. Other than when Lux Lisbon eventually goes on asexual rampage, throughout most of the novel, all of the sisters maintain their condition of virginity. Being a virgin is directly associated with being pure. Being that only one of the five sisters loses her virginity before committing suicide, it would seem as a whole, the group of sisters maintain this sense of purity. According to this theory, Lux losing her virginity is a flaw, but the rest of the sisters maintaining their virginity seems to outweigh the cost of Lux losing hers. From the beginning of the novel to the end, it isn't difficult to notice the environmental conditions in which the

characters live vastly declines. One noticeable environmental decline is seen through the loss of trees. In the beginning of the novel, the neighborhood is filled with trees, but a beetle infestation infects them and the deterioration that follows is described when the narrator says, "The Parks Department continued to cut down trees, removing a sick elm to save the remaining twenty, then removing another to save the remaining nineteen, and so on until only the half-tree remained in front of the Lisbon's old house" (Eugenides, 237). The sisters had to protest in order to temporarily keep their half-tree, which shows they were truly devastated with the declining environment.

Another aspect Eugenides uses to show the declining environment is through temperature change. In the beginning of the novel, the winters are harsh and cold. This changes as time goes on and the narrator does an excellent job depicting the declining winter scene: "Nowadays, because of shifting winds from the factories and the rising temperature of the earth, snow never comes in an onslaught anymore but by a slow accretion in the night, momentary suds. The world, a tired performer, offers us another half-assed season. Back in the day of the Lisbon girls, snow fell every week and we shoveled our driveways into heaps higher than our cars," (Eugenides, 161). This passage is crucial because it directly mentions the factories as part of the blame for the rise in temperature and worsening conditions. This pins the loss of environmental purity directly on the people themselves. Eugenides even uses personification and gives the earth the human trait of being tired to show the effects of negative environmental change are taking a toll on the planet. A final aspect Eugenides uses to show the declining environment is through the nuisance of fish flies. The fish flies are introduced in the very first chapter of the novel when the narrator says, "That was in June, fish-fly season, when each year our town is covered by the flotsam of those ephemeral insects... they blacken windows, coat cars and street lamps... always in the same brown ubiquity of flying sum" (Eugenides, 2). Bugs coating entire cars and streetlamps give the setting an apocalyptic feel, which helps set a dire tone for environmental change. The worsening of the environment is a loss of Earth's purity itself and sets the scene for the girls to commit suicide in an attempt to return this purity.

Eugenides writes about a suburb in Detroit that goes through negative changes in its environment, mostly caused by human actions such as the factories they operate, which doesn't set well with a group of sisters. This group of virgin sisters, who are described in ways that at times seem holy and sacred, symbolize purity itself. In an attempt to restore what should have never been lost, they sacrifice their own purity of their lives. This is an effort that ends in vein, as the environmental purity of Earth never returns, even after their deaths. Eugenides does this to show the purity of Earth is something that can't return once lost. The irresponsible actions of humans

that harm the environment are irreversible and are taking a toll on the planet. The Lisbon sister's story is one that calls for environment change and is made clear when the narrator says, "In the end, the tortures tearing the Lisbon girls pointed to a simple reasoned refusal to accept the world as it was handed down to them, so full of flaws" (Eugenides, 239). In their refusal to accept the world's flaws, their attempt to restore purity may have failed, but it serves as a learning lesson to help save what is left of Earth's purity. Eugenides also mentions: "Capitalism has resulted in material wellbeing but spiritual bankruptcy" (Eugenides, 226), which shows that in order to save what is left of the environment, people will have to put their patriarchal ideology aside and start adopting standards that put the environment first, not their wallets.

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WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN NIGERIA

Makenzie Harrison

Women across the world are continuously facing discrimination. Africa is noted for its underdevelopment of women's rights (Seager 17). Nigeria, in particular, is one of the lowest ranked countries in the world in terms of development no thanks to its location in the Global South; the country is surrounded by others of the same status or lower, in the bottom ten countries (17). Throughout Chinua Achebe's novel, *Things Fall Apart*, readers see that the leading male, Okonkwo, degrades his wife/wives through a variety of means. Okonkwo's reasons for his treatment of the women are rooted in the cultural belief that men are superior. Women are still forced to live "in perpetual fear" (13) of their husbands, the same way Okonkwo's wives did in the novel. Legislators seek changes that are desperately needed. Various forms of legislation have been drafted to address this injustice; however, they have not had the necessary impact. The implementation of legislation to end female discrimination and provide equal rights has not made significant improvements for the life of women in Nigeria, which can be attributed to the unwillingness to deviate from cultural norms.

The first notable move towards equality in Nigeria was the ratification of the Convention to End All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 2004 ("Nigeria"). CEDAW is a UN treaty that was adopted in 1979 and came into action in 1981 (Seager 14). This treaty was the first to directly address all women's rights instead of segregating topics into their own treaties; these treaties, however, set the stage for CEDAW (14).

CEDAW basically serves as a template for countries to establish women's rights in their own governing bodies of legislation (14). By ratifying this document, Nigeria was only morally bound to "develop and implement policies and laws to eliminate discrimination against women within their country" (14). CEDAW failed to provide the equal rights in Nigeria that it described because the government failed to create and enforce legislation based off of the recommendations provided.

CEDAW is often referred to as "the Bible of women empowerment" (Nkiruka and Akubue), but not for Nigeria. Following this signing, the public/private divide was still prominent, with women in the private sphere

and men in the public (Nkiruka and Akubue). When women are trapped in the private sphere, their rights are less likely to be deemed as human rights and instead are referred to solely as women's rights. Women's rights being separated from human rights as a whole instantly degrades women. This creates issues for women because their private status creates barriers for advancement in the society, specifically in the work realm. Instead of having a respectable position in the village, Ojiugo, one of Okonkwo's wives, is forced to focus on "[preparing Okonkwo's] afternoon meal" (Achebe 112) and other unpaid labor. The fact that his wives are also doing unpaid labor instead of, at least, informal labor also contributes to the degrading of women because of how unpaid labor is viewed (Harthcock). Unpaid labor, which consists of housework and other 'housewife' duties, is seen as effortless to society (Harthcock). Women will continue to experience work-related oppression until they are thrust into the public sphere alongside men.

The retention of the public/private divide can be derived from traditional and cultural factors (Nkiruka and Akubue). The separation of women from the rest of the public society, also known as men, is apparent in *Things Fall Apart*. At one point, the moving of chair is referred to as "a boy's job" (Achebe 44). This addresses the belief that men are the only ones worthy of jobs that demand physical ability in the public sphere. The issue is culturally woven. In northern Nigeria, education access is limited and the head of the family, the male, often pulls daughters out of school for marriage or care giving (Odigie-Emmanuel). This is directly related to the inequality of employment between men and women because women are deprived of their future at a young age without enrollment in school (Odigie-Emmanuel). In *Things Fall Apart*, instead of going to school, the "children [carry] pots of water" (Achebe 111) for the village. Elders are overlooking what will better the children's future for the benefit of the village in present day. Without the necessary education to better their chances for a better job and a higher income, women are unable to make advances in society to gain equal status.

A specific treaty to address the discrimination and abuse of women surfaced over twenty years after the ratification of CEDAW. The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, also known as the Maputo Protocol, is unlike the CEDAW because it targets a single issue instead of being all encompassing ("About"). The Maputo Protocol addresses women's health, specifically "Total Abortion Legalization" as well as combating Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) ("About"). Some individuals believe that the protocol was created to eradicate Africa of its traditional cultures ("About"). It has been said that the document contains "radical feminist language about the complete transformation of African cultures into a Western, Marxist-style genderless utopia" ("About"). As important as tradition and culture is, comments like this are the reason females do not have equal rights and continue to be

discriminated against. Nigeria's bond to their roots is the single reason why women continue to experience oppression.

Nigerian legislators have recently made efforts to improve women's lives. The newest attempt to enforce female equality was drafted in 2010 (Federal Government of Nigeria). The Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill was created to "incorporate and enforce certain provisions" (Federal Government of Nigeria) of legislation such as CEDAW, the Maputo Protocol, and others that have not been previously mentioned. The bill's overarching goal was to "accord women(s) rights equal to those of men in various spheres of life and to impose certain measures to address past and current discriminatory practices" ("Nigeria"). The attempt to finally enforce the boundaries outlined by previous treaties failed ("Nigeria"). Nigeria's Senate voted the bill down on March 15, 2015, ending all hope for equal rights in the near future ("Nigeria"). There were even provisions to the 2010 version of the legislation, which was strict in prohibiting "all forms of discrimination against women" ("Nigeria"). The original form of the document "stated that any law, regulation, custom and practice, which constitute discrimination, shall be null and void and of no effect and shall not be enforced against any person" ("Nigeria"). The fact that legislators were willing to revise this bill even though all the changes were necessary shows their dedication to the women of Nigeria and improving their quality of life.

Looking deeper into the Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill, one of the original objectives was to eliminate discrimination derived from culture or tradition ("Nigeria"). It can be argued that this distinction was one of the reasons government official did not favor this bill. The unwillingness to change or reevaluate legislation due to tradition is one of the leading reasons for discrimination against women. Specifically, the legislation addressed "sought to make modification to sociocultural practices in order to end the subjugation of women" ("Nigeria"). Early in *Things Fall Apart*, the narrator describes how Okonkwo did not have the same opportunities as other young men because "he neither inherited a barn nor a title, nor even a young wife" (Achebe 18) from his father. Women in Nigeria are still treated as possessions, especially when it comes to the instance of marriage, divorce, or widowhood. The bill tried to give women rights in these areas, but lawmakers were unable to grant women "the right to remarry and the right to marry a person of her choice" ("Nigeria") as well as other necessary freedoms. In over sixty years, there has been little to no advancement in the status of women in Nigeria. The failure to give women relationship rights reaffirms that the roots of discrimination are culturally bound, and the outlook for change is bleak.

Nigeria is a state based on traditional, cultural, and religious values, as are most African states. However, Nigeria is underdeveloped and continues to take steps backward because of their cultural unwillingness to free women from discrimination. Over fifty years after the publication of *Things Fall Apart*, the experiences of the Okonkwo's wives are still applicable to women in present society. Although the actions may have become more sophisticated, the discrimination is blatant. Nigerian society will continue to resist change if legislators continue to look at 'morality' in terms of tradition instead of legality when making decisions on women's rights.

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HOPE IS HERE

Abby Schabel

Hope is here! Imagine a village of severely impoverished people saying this as you walk down the street. For most people, this seems out of reach. The idea of changing the world is intimidating. It is common for people to have the attitude that the world is too messed up to change or that one person cannot make a difference so it is pointless to try. I will admit that there are times when I have thought, “Changing the world is a nice idea, but it will never actually happen”. Issues like ending racism, poverty, and inequality are all lumped into the discouraging category of “impossible.” An issue that my heart goes out to is poverty in third world countries. I am involved in several organizations whose missions are to help these countries such as Hope 2 Liberia, The Boaz Project, and Operation Christmas Child. While I know these are great organizations and I love trying to make a difference, sometimes the problems just seem too big to overcome.

The statistics one can read about poverty are overwhelming. One that has always been especially discouraging is the way wealth is distributed in our world. I know when I read how many kids are starving or need water that while the solution is not easy, there is a solution there. However, it seems like poverty will always be an issue because the greatest percentage of the wealth in the world belongs to only a few people. A way to visualize this is the champagne glass distribution of wealth. It shows how large of a gap there is between the incomes of the richest people in the world to the poorest people in the world.

This graphic is from 1992, but unfortunately, research shows that the gap still exists today (Korten, 1992). April Jurgenson, co-director of The Boaz Project that is a ministry to orphans in Russia and India, told me once that she does not give a lot of thought to ending poverty. This seemed strange to me since ending poverty would surely help the orphans she works with, but then she explained that instead of trying to end poverty, she believes it is her job to help the people God has placed in her life. She said, “I don't pretend to have the wisdom it would take to solve it. Honestly, I think it is beyond human scope. Rather, I think about doing what God puts in front of me.

He didn't tell me to end poverty, but to care for the poor. So, I

believe I can make personal sacrifices of time, money, effort, and voice to advocate for, protect and serve the poor. If we who are blessed with more materially shared open-handedly with those who are in need, the world truly would be a better place,” (Jurgenson, 2015). While Jurgenson is talking about poverty in this case, I believe it can apply to any issue the world is facing. The idea of ending a huge issue definitely seems impossible, however if everyone could look at things the way Jurgenson does and do their part to change the world, it really would be a better place. If we all have the mentality that we cannot make a difference, then we will not, but if we each have the mentality that we can change the world, then I believe collectively we will.

While there are many famous examples of individuals who have started movements or organizations that have helped change the world, perhaps the most important lesson I have ever learned about changing the world is from someone that is not famous at all. Randy Tempest is a good family friend and a board member of Hope 2 Liberia. The mission statement of Hope 2 Liberia is, “to provide safe and living water for the nation of Liberia, resulting in better health, available education and stronger leaders; all culminating in a renewed sense of hope,” (Hope 2 Liberia, 2010).

Liberia, among many other African countries, is severely deprived of a resource that we take for granted. According to the 2010 report from Oxfam, an independent organization from the United Kingdom studying the needs of the Liberian people, three out of four Liberians have no access to safe drinking water and six out of seven cannot access sanitation facilities such as toilets (Hobbs, 2010). It is disheartening to think that there are so many people going without something so basic. In this graphic, one can see how many countries struggle to have safe drinking water, and Liberia is in the dark red zone (Cooley, 2014, p. 167).

Hope 2 Liberia was unofficially started in 2005, after three men made a mission trip to Liberia, and it became recognized as a not-for-profit in 2010. Now, with the help of many donors and supporters, Randy and the rest of the Hope 2 Liberia team is doing amazing work to bring water and hope to the Liberian people. Simply put, the reason Randy works so hard to help the people of Liberia is because they are in desperate need of it. In addition to the problems Liberia has with clean water, they just emerged from a 14-year civil war, which has left the country devastated. With little infrastructure in place, an unemployment rate over 85%, and a lagging economy, the people of Liberia are in need of help (Hope 2 Liberia, 2010). On Hope 2 Liberia’s website, this graphic can be seen under a tab “Why Liberia.” After reading the facts, it is easy to see why Randy and the people of Hope 2 Liberia are working so hard to do their part to help this country.

With this in mind, the work that Randy does seems even more important, but it also seems extremely overwhelming. It would be almost

impossible to get clean water to all of the people who need it. Something that Randy likes to say is, “There’s no greater ministry than the person right in front of you,” (Tempest, 2016). The reason I love this saying so much is because it puts perspective on the issue of changing the world. To Randy, changing the world is making a difference for the person right in front of you. With Hope 2 Liberia, they may not be giving the whole world safe water, but for the villages that they help, it makes a world of difference. Often, we get caught up in the fact that one person can only do so much, but if we have the right perspective, one person can make a huge impact. Can one person really change the whole world? It depends on how you look at it. Randy believes your mission should never be greater than the person in front of you because impacting people is what really matters. If he can change one person’s life for the better, then he is changing the world for the better. If we all did this, then no problem would seem too big to tackle.

Hope 2 Liberia is not an organization made up of just one person. There are many people working with Randy to bring hope to the Liberian people and the work that each person does to bring clean water to them has saved countless lives. I believe Randy is accomplishing his goal of impacting the people around him in the work he does with Hope 2 Liberia, and that is changing the world. As Randy demonstrates, making a positive impact on the world does not have to be discovering the key to world peace; it can be as simple as buying food for a family in need or adopting a child who does not have a home. Most people would not think of these things as changing the world, but acts like this can change a few people’s worlds, and if everyone did that I think we would end up changing the whole world. The key is how you look at it. In the novel Brunelleschi’s Dome, we learned how important it can be to have a different perspective. Brunelleschi’s ideas for the dome were very unorthodox and daring. He changed the way domes were made by deciding not to use any external buttresses or supporting centring. This made building the dome extremely challenging. In these images, one can see the traditional centring that would be used as support when building a dome and Brunelleschi’s design for his dome. The Florence Cathedral Dome was an unprecedented accomplishment. Its largest diameter is slightly greater than that of the Pantheon and it is twice as tall (Mainstone, 2009, pp. 19-20).

Brunelleschi had to invent many devices to even make his vision of the dome possible, however, without his unique perspective, there would be no brilliant dome on top of the Florence Cathedral (King, 2000). In almost everything in life, perspective is important, and changing the world is no exception. One does not have to make the news or become famous in order to make a difference. Countless people do small things every day to make the world a better place. If we could change our perspective from one person needing to change the whole world, to each person making a difference to the people around them, then the world would be a better place.

Something else I have learned from Randy is the attitude one needs in order to produce change. With whatever he is doing in life, Randy likes to say, “We don’t have to, we get to,” (Tempest, 2016). While this may not seem like any groundbreaking advice, if we really try to live our lives by this saying, we would all be better off. When thinking about changing the world, if we look at it as “we get to” make a change, instead of “we have to” it relieves the pressure. When Randy is working with Hope 2 Liberia, he feels that he gets to help the people of Liberia. He feels blessed to be able to change these people’s lives, and it brings with it a sense of passion. Taking the “we get to” attitude makes you feel a passion for the cause rather than a duty. I believe when someone is passionate about something, like Randy is, then it will lead to change. Terry W York, conductor and associate professor at Baylor University, discusses in his article *Passion and the Conductor* that the key element of a good musical performance is not perfection, but passion. Each person, from the conductor, to the singers, to even the audience, needs to bring passion or else the performance will be lacking (York, 1999, pp. 31-35). This applies directly to service. If someone is not passionate about their cause, it will be hard for them to make an impact. If they focus only on being perfect and carrying out their duty to the community, but lack passion, then just like the musical performance, their service will not reach its potential. The reason Randy and Hope 2 Liberia have changed so many lives is because everyone involved brings passion to their cause. Something they like to say is “Hope can’t wait”. This is because they have seen too many people die from reasons they should not have. Because of this, they don’t “have to” build wells for the Liberian people, they “get to” and it makes them try harder each and every day to bring hope to these people.

Along with the right perspective and attitude to evoke change, there is also a practical side to carrying out Hope 2 Liberia’s mission. Because there are very poor sanitation practices among the people of Liberia, it is not enough to simply install a new well. Educating the Liberians on proper sanitation practices and proper use of the water systems is essential. To purify the water that is available, Hope 2 Liberia installs Sawyer water filtration and purification systems. The filters they use are based on the same technology as kidney dialysis. They are made up of tiny “U” shaped micro tubes with pores as small as 0.1 micron absolute, so that no harmful bacteria, protozoa, or cysts can get through. The water that comes out of these filters is 99.9 percent free all harmful bacteria. The cost of one filter with a bucket kit is approximately 60 dollars. The amazing thing is this is a one-time cost because these filters are designed to last a lifetime. Even more impressive than that is how many people just one filtration system can help. The system is designed to be used with any size container, which means one filter system can serve a single family, or depending on the container size, an entire village or community may be served. One filter can produce up to 500 gallons of

safe water per day (Hope 2 Liberia, 2010). In total, Hope 2 Liberia has installed six large water systems, nearly 500 family water systems, and 12 wells. The work Randy and all of the people associated with Hope 2 Liberia have done is truly life changing for thousands of Liberians.

The reason that this filtration system is such a powerful tool in helping the people of Liberia is because of all the health consequences that can come from drinking contaminated water. The majority of diseases in Liberia are caused by unsafe drinking water. Every year thousands of Liberians die from dysentery, cholera, typhoid and infectious hepatitis due to compromised water (Hope 2 Liberia, 2010). It is almost unbelievable how many people globally die from diseases that people in the United States or other developed countries do not have to worry about. This chart shows the number of deaths and DALYs (disability-adjusted life years) from various water-related diseases from 2002-2004 across the world (Cooley, 2014, p. 272). In 2003 there was a particularly bad outbreak of cholera in Monrovia, Liberia due to increased civil conflict in the country. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), “During June 2-September 22, of an estimated one million permanent residents and 172,000 IDPs in Monrovia (1), 16,969 (1.4%) persons sought medical care for an illness consistent with the surveillance case definition for cholera,” (Briand, 2003).

Cholera is an acute, diarrheal illness caused by infection of the intestine with the bacterium *Vibrio cholera*. It is spread by ingestion of contaminated food or water. The infection is usually mild and has very little symptoms, but can sometimes be serious and even life threatening. Cholera causes many deaths in third world countries even though it is easily prevented and treated. Experts attribute the cholera outbreak in Monrovia to an acute shortage of clean water, poor sanitation, and crowded living conditions because of the civil war. This image shows the increase in cholera cases by the week from January-September 2003 in Monrovia (Briand, 2003). Fortunately, there were treatment centers set up to help with this epidemic and the case-fatality ratio in cholera-treatment centers was less than one percent, however this still resulted in many deaths that could have been avoided with clean drinking water.

In the article *Water for the Third World*, the point is made that many fecal-oral diseases like cholera, typhoid, diarrheas, dysenteries or hepatitis are spread because of unsafe drinking water. The article also reiterates one of the beliefs that Hope 2 Liberia has, that improving the water quality alone will not change the situation. The people in these countries also need to be taught proper sanitation, or else deaths that are easily preventable will keep occurring (Biswas, 1981). This is why Hope 2 Liberia has extended their ministry beyond just water. They have also built six medical clinics, a church, a Hope Center, a school (Hope Academy), a soccer field, and repaired an orphanage.

The mission of Hope 2 Liberia is to bring hope to these people, and it comes in many different forms. There are a lot of organizations and people that are trying to make a difference in the world. The reason I love the work that Randy does with Hope 2 Liberia is because it brings hope to a group of people that have no other reason to have hope. Randy told me that every person he meets there is the poorest person you will ever meet. They live in devastating conditions, but Hope 2 Liberia is beginning to change that. All of the numbers and statistics of the way they are changing lives are amazing, but it is hard to quantify the impact Randy and the Hope 2 Liberia team has made. One of the best things about Hope 2 Liberia is that they have stuck with these people for over 10 years now. The people of Liberia know that they can count on the Hope 2 Liberia team, and it has made a huge impact. Now, Randy says the Liberian people are following their example and really want to make a change for their country. They are even learning a new way of farming which can increase their crop yield 70 times. Randy and the Hope 2 Liberia team have done the seemingly impossible; they have changed the world. Maybe not the entire world, but they have changed a lot of lives through this ministry and they are not done yet.

Now, with their white shirts that say Hope 2 Liberia, the Liberian people know them as the people who bring hope. It is not easy to do what they have done. It takes a new perspective, dedication, and passion to evoke change, but when Randy and everyone wearing those white shirts walk down the street, the Liberian people shout, "Hope is here!" and it really is.

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